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*The Diary
of my
Honeymoon*

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Lady Cecilia Stephana Anne
Daughter of the Earl Rushbury

THE DIARY OF MY HONEYMOON

Anonymous



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The

Diary of My Honeymoon

FOUROAKS, *January 1st.*

WHAT a strange New Year's Day! Coming after such a horrid Christmas, the first I have ever spent without Papa and Mama, it has given me so much to think about that my head aches.

When I got up this morning and looked out of my window over the park, I saw that it had snowed in the night. The trees looked lovely, and there was ice on the pond near the drive.

Kelly brought in my hot water with a very long face. She always gets sentimental on birthdays and New Year's days, and ever since Christmas she has been worse than ever. She insisted on kissing me, and I could see that she was crying. I scolded her a little, but it made her worse. So I asked her what she was crying for.

"It's so hard to think of changes coming," she replied darkly.

"What changes?" said I.

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"Why, my lady, you're grown up now, and you'll be eighteen next month, and it's not likely Lady Rushbury will let you stay down here with your governess and me now you're old enough to be presented."

"Someone has told you something?" I said.

For I could see that these ideas would never have come into my old nurse's head of their own accord. Then she confessed that Miss Trood had had a letter, and had told her something. But she wouldn't say any more, and I dressed as quickly as possible to find out what was going to happen.

There was a worse scene to be gone through with Miss Trood than with Kelly. Her eyes were red, and she was very melancholy indeed; and she told me that Papa was coming down, and that luncheon was to be served at half-past one in the Great Hall for him and two other people only.

"Who are the people?" I asked.

Miss Trood looked rather sphinx-like, as she said she didn't know who they were, but that they were probably "not nice" people, as she and I were not to be at luncheon.

I said nothing for a few moments, for I knew that Miss Trood had worried herself about our hav-

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ing spent Christmas by ourselves, and that she, as well as Kelly, had been talking about "changes," without telling me anything more, until I had become nearly as low-spirited as they, without knowing why.

"Has Papa written to you?" I asked.

"No; Lady Rushbury."

"Mama! Well, let me see her letter."

"No, Cecilia, I can't."

"Why not? Why do you and Kelly make a mystery of everything?" I said.

"Well, I had better, I suppose, tell you this: that the Earl is very hard pressed for money just now, and that these people he is bringing down are coming on business. I suppose something to do with mortgages, and raising money, and that sort of thing."

"Oh, is that all? Then why have you and Kelly been crying?"

She wouldn't tell me at first, but presently I coaxed her into saying she was afraid, as Papa and Mama never came down to Fouroaks now, and as I was growing up, the place would be given up or let, and that I should have to go to live with Mama in town.

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This was dreadful. I should break my heart if I had to live in London, away from the ponies, and the garden, and my animals and birds, and the people I've known so long. Fancy leaving Nannie Barnes and Mrs. Fielder and the old Hawkinses, when they look forward so to my coming to see them every week!

I asked if she disliked London as much as I did, since she cried so much at the thought of going; and then she said that she would have to go away, and Kelly too, and that if I went up to town it would be to be married.

At this I laughed, and told her I did not mean to marry for years and years, if I ever did. But she cut me short, and told me I knew nothing of life, and that girls in my position were not free to do as they pleased about such things.

I had not the heart to tell her how wrong she was, and how ridiculous it was to think that English girls had those things arranged for them, like French girls. And then we had breakfast without any more talk about these things, and I stuck Jack's card on the mantelpiece in the breakfast-room.

It is a whole year since I saw him. Not since Christmas a year ago, when he and my Uncle Alger-

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non came with Papa and Mama, and Penrhyn and Marjorie, and a lot more people, and we had such a lovely time. I shall never forget that dance with Jack, and that talk in the winter garden afterwards. I suppose he hasn't forgotten it either, though he never says anything about it in his letters. Dear old Jack! I wish he would send me that photograph he promised me! I wonder whether he is as handsome as ever! He will be twenty-one on the twelfth of February, and I must work him something first. Slippers, I suppose. Only Miss Trood will have to do the hard part, so it will be more her present than mine, and I don't want *that!*

Miss Trood wanted me to keep indoors, because of Papa's people; but I could not get through the morning without one peep at the ponies. So I stole out at the first opportunity after I had done my practising, and got down to the stables about one, with my lap full of carrots.

I didn't dare go to my room for a hat, for fear she would catch me and stop me; so I stole Kelly's ulster from the housemaid's cupboard on the stairs, where she keeps it on a nail, and pulled the hood over my head and ran out like that.

The snow was thawing, and I got in a fearful

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mess; and of course my shoes and stockings were wet through before I reached the stables. But Fan and Flurry and Folly were so pleased to see me, and I was so pleased to see them, that I forgot my wet feet, and the time, and everything; and I went into the loose box and got on Flurry's back, and went round and round, holding on by his mane and enjoying myself thoroughly, till suddenly the place seemed to grow dark, and I saw a man looking in.

The next moment I heard Papa's voice, and I jumped off Flurry's back and tried to hide myself.

The man raised his hat and went away without saying anything, and I waited in the darkest corner, feeling very uncomfortable and disreputable, until their voices died away.

When I got back to the house, flattering myself that I had been very lucky to have met nobody, I ran right into the lion's den! For just as I was running through the passage to the back staircase, the library door opened, and Papa and two other men came out.

I was so frightened that I dropped one of my shoes. Both of them had got so heavy with snow and mud that I could scarcely keep them on a minute. Of course I didn't stop to pick it up, but ran on, hop-

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ing nobody would guess that the female Guy Fawkes was Lord Rushbury's daughter.

But I heard a man's voice say :

"The little lady has dropped her shoe. Cinderella, by Jove!"

And the next minute I had to stop, for the same voice, close behind me, said :

"Your ladyship, this is your slipper, I think."

I had to turn round and thank him, and take the horrid thing, which was as unlike a lady's slipper as possible! And then I saw that it was the same man who had looked in while I was in the loose box. He was very polite, indeed; and he smiled and bowed very deeply. I scarcely looked up, but took the shoe and made off, dreadfully worried as to what Papa would say.

Miss Trood was very angry with me when I got upstairs, and when Papa came up, an hour later, after luncheon, I was afraid I was in for what Penrhyn calls a "jolly row."

But poor Papa was not himself, and instead of scolding me for what I had done he kissed me quietly, and told Miss Trood he should be glad if she and I would dine with him and his friends that evening.

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He was looking worried, and I felt very sorry for him. It seems so natural for Papa to be happy that he scarcely seemed like Papa at all. He soon went away, and I had the uncomfortable feeling that he looked ashamed of himself, and I wondered whether he thought that I had really disgraced him by being caught like that. However, he didn't say a word about it, and, of course, I didn't.

I thought Miss Trood looked *odd*, but she said nothing either, except to lament that I had no frock to put on newer than one I had in the autumn.

I told her it would do quite well, and that, as I was not "out," I was not expected to be very smart.

When we went down together to the Blue Saloon, we found Papa and the two gentlemen already there. They were introduced to me, and I found that the one who had run after me with my shoe was Sir Lionel Eberhard.

He was very polite to me, and smiled whenever he caught my eye, and asked me all about my ponies, and whether I was fond of horses. And he told me about some little white ponies he had seen in Austria, and made me long to see them. Then he promised to try his hardest to get me a pair. I was delighted, but I don't suppose he will remember.

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He was very nice to me, but I don't think I like him very much, for he has such horrid little eyes and such a curious thick way of speaking. His teeth are beautifully white and his hair is black; but though Papa's hair is beginning to grow a little grey, Papa looks much younger than Sir Lionel.

But then, of course, Papa is Papa, and it's not fair to expect everybody else to be like him.

The other gentleman, Mr. Calstock, has a curious face, and I noticed that when he was talking he looked kind and pleasant. But when he was not speaking his face looked as hard as stone. That is a bad way to express it, but I can't describe it differently.

Miss Trood looked rather frightened all the evening, and when dinner was over and she and I came back to the Blue Saloon, I asked her what was the matter.

She laughed, and said, Nothing; and asked me what I thought of Papa's friends, and whether I liked them. I said, Yes; and told her of Sir Lionel's promise, and she looked more frightened than ever.

So I asked her, the idea coming quickly into my head, who Sir Lionel was.

But she would not tell me, though she said she

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had heard of him. She said that she believed he was a very rich man.

"Then perhaps," said I, "he has come to buy Fouroaks."

Miss Trood said quickly that perhaps he had; but she said it in such a way that I knew that was not the real reason of his visit, and I wondered what that was.

"Do you like Mr. Calstock?" she then asked, and I could see that she did not care what I said; that she only said it for the sake of dropping the subject of Sir Lionel.

I said I had scarcely spoken to him, and that he had a curious face.

"He is Lord Rushbury's solicitor," said Miss Trood.

I said I thought people's lawyers were always old men, and that Mr. Calstock was not at all old.

Then she said that the firm was Calstock and Penn, and that Mr. Calstock was the son of the senior partner.

All this worried me a little, as I could see that these gentlemen had come on some business that Papa did not like; for he was silent and depressed all the time.

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When they came in, Sir Lionel came straight to me, and talked about all sorts of things, and made me laugh. And I thought, though it was kind of him to take so much trouble to amuse me, that I liked him less than I did at first.

He told me he had been so much amused by the glimpse of me he had got in the stable that morning, that he had begged my father to let me come down to dinner.

"And," he said, "I then saw, what I had guessed already, that Lord Rushbury's daughter will be the most beautiful woman of her season."

I was quite surprised, and rather uncomfortable; but I laughed and said that I did not think so.

But he persisted, and said:

"With one of those diamond crowns that ladies wear nowadays, and a double rope of pearls round your neck, you would outshine the loveliest, Lady Cecilia."

I was so abashed by the way he stared at me, and by the persistency with which he looked and spoke, that I could say nothing. Then he said:

"Would you not like to see yourself wearing the jewels of a queen, Lady Cecilia?"

Then I laughed, and said, No; I should not care

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for it; and that I liked flowers better than jewels, and was never so happy as in my riding habit.

He seemed much amused, and said I was a sensible girl.

And as I looked across the room I saw Papa and Mr. Calstock looking at me in a most curious way—Papa out of the corners of his eyes, as if he did not want to be seen looking, and Mr. Calstock in a very odd way, as if he pitied me.

It made me feel quite cold, and I jumped up suddenly from the chair, and let the kitten fall off my lap. Sir Lionel picked it up and gave it into my arms with another look that made me uncomfortable. It was odd how I liked him less and less the more kind he grew!

Then I had to play, and I made ever so many mistakes, but of course both Sir Lionel and Mr. Calstock had to say I played beautifully; and then Miss Trood accompanied me while I sang. I know I was horribly out of tune, for I was nervous and worried; I did not know why.

But Sir Lionel told me I had the sweetest voice he had ever heard.

When I said good night, he kissed my hand.

I did not like that at all.

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Papa seemed frightfully nervous when he kissed me, and as I came upstairs I felt the tears coming to my eyes.

I don't quite know why I feel so miserable to-night, but I suppose it is because of the way Miss Trood and Kelly began the day by crying, and then because Papa looked so worried and Mr. Calstock so grave.

I do hope something dreadful isn't going to happen!

It has been a strange day.

FOUROAKS, *January 2nd.*

I WAS down to breakfast before anybody else, but Papa came into the room a minute later, and whisked me off at once into the study, next to the breakfast-room. I could see that his hands were trembling as he took me to the window and said, very quickly :

"Cis, I want to talk to you. You're eighteen now, aren't you?"

I was frightened by the look on his face, but I said that I should be eighteen in nine weeks.

"Well," he said, "how would you like to be married?"

I nearly screamed, but, of course, I didn't quite. When I had had time to get breath, I said that I didn't want to be married at all for a long time. He seemed impatient, and he cut me short.

"Your mother married me when she was only a few weeks over eighteen," he said; "and I think early marriages are the happiest. I want you to think about it."

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I was bewildered.

We said nothing to each other for a little while, and then an idea came into my head, and I said in a sort of whisper:

"Papa, has Jack been speaking to you?"

Papa's voice rang out so sharply that I was quite startled.

"Jack! Jack who?" said he.

"Oh, Papa, Jack Eardington, of course," I answered, and my spirit sank as I saw that I had made a dreadful mistake.

I didn't look at him again, for I knew he was angry.

"Jack Eardington! Why, he hasn't a sixpence!" he said quickly.

"He likes me, I think," I said in a very low voice.

"My dear child, what is the good of his liking you, or any girl? The chief thing—the only thing you must have if you want to get married—is money—lots of money."

I was startled. Quite suddenly I looked up and said:

"What is it, Papa?"

He answered without looking at me:

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"Sir Lionel Eberhard is willing to marry you. He is one of the richest men in England."

Again I nearly screamed.

"Willing!" I said. "Yes, but I'm not willing. And I should think you're not willing either."

He looked at me quickly, and I could see that he was frightened.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

I was daring now, and bold. I stood up, and looked him full in the face:

"You wouldn't want me to marry him, would you?"

"Why not?"

I was shocked. It seemed to me that the reasons were plain: Sir Lionel was old, he was not handsome or charming, and somehow I was sure that he did not belong to the same sort of people as Papa and Mama and my friends. And now that this horrid suggestion about marrying him was put into my head I found out quite suddenly that I didn't like him at all.

But to have to answer Papa's question, put in such a tone, too, was dreadful. I felt as if I was choking.

"He is much older than I am," I said in a whisper.

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"Yes, yes; I know that. But if you could like him—he would be generous to you, and he would be kind to you, I think," said Papa.

I shook my head.

"I couldn't, I couldn't, I couldn't!" I gasped out.

Papa's face looked dreadfully white, and it cut me to the heart to think I was disappointing him. But he patted me on the shoulder and said:

"All right, my dear. You must do as you like, of course. But if you were a little older, and I could talk to you better——"

He broke off suddenly, and patting my shoulder again, ended with a nod and a smile, and again said, "All right, my dear."

Then he turned away and said:

"Well, come to breakfast. They will be down by this time."

And then there came upon me the strangest feeling I have ever had yet. Though he was so sweet and so kind, and though he turned away as if the dreadful thing he had spoken about was dropped altogether, I had, just for a moment, a feeling as if I had suddenly found my hands and feet tied up so that I couldn't move. And a horrible feeling

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came over me that something was hanging over me that I shouldn't be able to escape from.

Of course, it all passed off, and we went into the next room and met Sir Lionel and Mr. Calstock, and found Miss Trood trying to chirp small talk to them, while they left it to her to do the talking. I shouldn't like to be a governess, and to have to fill up gaps like that, talking when nobody listens!

I shook hands with the two visitors and sat down. But I thought Sir Lionel looked at me, and smiled at me, as if he had said something to Papa about that dreadful thing, and as if he was not prepared for what I had had to say.

And I heard Papa say to him, "Not yet," as they sat down to breakfast.

Before eleven o'clock they had all three gone away, and at once I went to Miss Trood, and insisted that she should tell me all she knew about Sir Lionel Eberhard.

She refused for a long time, but presently she seemed to make up her mind to something, and said:

"He's a money-lender."

"A money-lender!" I said, scarcely believing her.

It seemed so impossible that Papa could have

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thought of marrying his daughter to a person of that sort. I suppose she saw that I did not quite believe her, so she was nettled into saying:

"People of that sort are received into society now, as they would not have been in the days of Queen Victoria."

I wondered whether Papa had told her anything about Sir Lionel's horrid proposal. Surely she could have known nothing about it yesterday, when she cried about my possible marriage!

I made up my mind to find out.

"Miss Trood, I wish you would let me see the letter you got from Mama yesterday."

"Oh, no. Her ladyship's letters are confidential. I've told you what she said."

"Well, tell me this: did she say anything about Sir Lionel?"

Miss Trood looked shocked.

"Oh, no, of course not."

"Sure?"

"Quite, quite sure."

"Tell me just what she said about me, about what she meant me to do."

She looked distressed and puzzled for a moment, but then she said:

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"I think I have told you nearly everything already. She wrote that you were nearly eighteen, that it was time you came to town, to be presented and taken into society. And she added, though really I scarcely like to tell you such details, that there was a difficulty about getting all the money that would be needed to give you a proper introduction into the world, such as your sister, Lady Marjorie, had."

I shrugged my shoulders. All this talk about me, as if I were a "the latest spring goods," to be on view by a certain date, was horrid.

"I wish we could stay quietly here," I said. "All the money that was spent on poor Marjorie didn't do her much good."

Poor Marjorie! She was the beauty of her season five years ago, and she has been married twice since then, and I know she can't be happy, because as soon as her name is mentioned people look uncomfortable and change the subject. And I never see her now, and I have never seen her second husband, Sir Giles Luffenham, at all.

Miss Trood at once suggested a walk in the park, though the ground was still in a dreadful state with the half-melted snow. And I have been left to think about these things by myself all day.

FOUROAKS, *January 3rd.*

MISS TROOD and I had an exciting morning, for the parcel post brought us a lot of most beautiful presents from Sir Lionel Eberhard. I felt rather guilty about taking mine, and she looked quite scared when she found that she had her share of the good things.

There were some lovely sweets for me, in a white satin box shaped like a Sedan chair, with painted panels. I didn't want to accept it, but it was so very pretty that I had to uncover it and look at it again, and then, when I saw Miss Trood eating the sweets out of *her* box, which was nearly as pretty as mine, I couldn't resist eating one of mine; and then, of course, I couldn't stop.

Then I had four lovely white doves of some special sort, in a cage tied up with white satin ribbon. These came later, having been sent by train.

I felt that I liked him a little better when I got the doves.

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And I had a pretty little case with a gold chate-laine, which I shall certainly not wear, as I could not bear to have a lot of things rattling and jangling at my waist.

And there was a great bundle of new music, with some songs. And on Sir Lionel's card, which I found pinned to one of the songs, there was written:

"Songs for the sweetest singer in the world."

Really, if he were only quite different, I should have to say he does the thing very well.

Miss Trood had a gold brooch in the form of a swallow with a pearl dangling from its mouth. I don't think I ever saw anybody so pleased! I think she felt sorry, then, that she had told me he was a money-lender, for she was careful to remark during luncheon upon "the wonderful strides good breeding had made among the commercial classes."

I knew what she meant, but I was very good, and I didn't smile.

FOUROAKS, *January 4th.*

SUCH an exciting day!

We had not yet left the breakfast-room, where Miss Trood and I had just had luncheon, when we were told that Mr. Eardington was in the Blue Saloon.

I knew it must be Jack, and when Miss Trood wanted to go and see him first, I wouldn't let her, so we went in together.

Of course it was Jack, looking ever so much nicer than he looked when I saw him last, and as jolly as ever. I had been wondering how I should get a talk with him, without Miss Trood to listen. But he managed it beautifully. He has such a way of getting round people. He just told her that he was going to take me for a ride, and though she did not quite like it, the thing was settled, for I ran away at once to put on my habit, leaving it to him to smooth things over with her.

I took care not to meet Miss Trood again, but

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waited for Jack at the stables instead of having the horses brought round.

He came running across the grass, which is nearly clear of snow now, and we mounted and trotted off through the park.

Oh, it was lovely, lovely, lovely!

I asked him what he was doing, and he answered, "Nothing, as usual."

Then he said, "You will be doing something before me, Cis, so I hear!"

I felt that I was growing horribly red, and I asked him what he meant.

"Why, my father heard from Aunt Vi this morning, and she told him all about it. So I thought I'd run down and see you, and offer my congratulations."

Although I pretended not to know what he was talking about, I had just the same feeling I had had before, right in the midst of all the happiness of seeing Jack. I felt as if my feet and hands were tightly tied up, so that I couldn't move.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

Jack laughed, and looked at me with a mischievous expression.

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"Well, I know it's a secret still, but I hear you're going to make a great match."

"Mama said that?" I almost shrieked.

"Hush! Don't make so much noise," said Jack. And he looked very uncomfortable. "Surely, surely it's all right?" he said nervously. "Or was Aunt Vi drawing the long bow? Isn't it settled?"

"It isn't settled, and it never will be," I answered, "if Mama means that I'm going to be married to that horrid Sir Lionel Eberhard."

"Sir Lionel Eberhard! Do you mean it? By Jove, what luck!"

He spoke with real envy, and stared at me as if I had suddenly become an object of enormous admiration in his eyes. I was disgusted, and when we had ridden on a little way I began to cry.

Jack was all kindness, all remorse in a moment.

"Why, Cis," he said, "I don't understand you! Aunt Vi wrote to my father telling him that you were going to marry Eberhard, and asking him to lend her money for the preliminary expenses."

I felt as if I could scarcely breathe.

"I'm not going to marry him," I said faintly. "Papa did ask me, but I said I wouldn't. Do you know him, Jack? Do you know what he's like?"

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"Oh, yes, everybody knows Eberhard. They say he's worth a couple of millions. All the women in London have been after him, trying to nail him for their daughters—or for themselves. And to think that my little cousin, not yet out, should be the lucky one, after all."

"I don't think it lucky, and I think it's horrid, simply horrid of you, Jack, to talk as if you thought it possible for me to marry a man I don't like."

And I burst into fresh tears.

Jack drew his horse close to mine, and put his arm round me, and tried to kiss me. But I wouldn't let him.

"Don't, don't," I said. "Oh, Jack, I thought you'd be nice to me, and you—you——"

"My darling little Cis, I didn't mean not to be nice. You don't know how I've been thinking of you, and longing to see you. And then, when this news came, I thought it was a good excuse for coming."

"What! To congratulate me on marrying—another man!"

It seemed terrible to me to have to say this, caring for Jack as I did, and hoping, as I had been

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hoping, down in my heart of hearts, that he meant to say something, oh, so different to me!

"Another man!" He repeated the words softly, as if he understood at last what was in my mind. It made me ashamed, to think that I had had to put the idea into his head. He reined in his horse till he was close to mine, and said in a low voice, "Do you think I would have let you marry any one else, if *I* could have been lucky enough?"

I turned to him, with the tears running down my cheeks.

"Oh, Jack, dear Jack, isn't it possible?" I sobbed. He shook his head.

"No, dear. We shouldn't have any money. Your father is up to his eyes in debt—doesn't know where to turn to get along; and mine never had any money. How could we live? And what do you suppose Aunt Vi and Uncle Harold would say if I were to go to them and tell them I wanted to marry you? I should get thrown down the steps, or locked up for a lunatic!"

Each word he said was like a stab to me. I had never thought much about these things; I have always been too happy to worry my head about them. But now I began to know that I had always had,

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down in my heart, the thought that some day Jack would ask me to marry him, and that we should be very, very happy.

I couldn't answer, and I couldn't leave off crying. Suddenly he put his arm round me again, and again he tried to kiss me, and I brushed him away.

"Don't be unkind, Cis," he said plaintively. "Why won't you let me kiss you, dear?"

I turned to him, my face burning.

My voice sounded as if I were being strangled.

"I can't, I can't," I said. "It would mean so much to me, to kiss—any one. I—I couldn't do it, unless I meant——"

He let his arm fall down.

"You're an odd little creature," said he in a low voice. "If you feel like that about just a kiss they ought not to——"

"Ought not to what?"

"Why, they ought not to make you marry Eberhard."

I laughed. It was so absurd. And yet, even as I laughed, I felt that dead weight fall on my heart again.

"They can't marry me against my will," I said disjointedly.

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Jack just shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, can't they?" said he.

After that I don't remember what we said, or whether we said anything. Those words have rung in my ears ever since:

"Oh, can't they?"

When he went away after tea with Miss Trood in the Blue Saloon, the words seemed to form themselves into a tune, and I have heard it all the evening.

I can hear it now: "Oh, can't they? Can't they? Can't they?"

BROOK STREET, *January 6th.*

NOTHING happened yesterday, but oh, to-day!

We got Mama's letter this morning, telling us to come up to town at once, and we started, Miss Trood and I, soon after breakfast.

I never felt so miserable before as I did when I went down to see Flurry and Fan and Folly, and to take them some sugar. I knew that I shouldn't be allowed to come back, and I threw my arms round their necks and hugged them all, one after the other. Flurry tried to bite me!

Miss Trood knew that something was going to happen, for she didn't chatter, as she generally does when Mama sends for us in a hurry in a letter without any stops except dashes.

Kelly's eyes were red, of course, and she would kiss me when she said good-bye. I hate being kissed by Kelly. She is a good old thing, but when she kisses me something horrid always happens. So I always feel that it brings bad luck.

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Mama said in her letter that we had some shopping to do, and that she should meet us in the brougham.

Miss Trood and I scarcely spoke as we travelled up, but she would look at me as a person would look at a pet lamb going to the butcher's. I told her that, and she looked cross and frightened, and said she was surprised to hear such a simile from a young lady's lips.

Miss Trood is always surprised at a young lady's doing anything but sit and smile!

I wonder what governesses really think of their pupils! I suppose they tell their own friends; but they don't tell us, and they tell something quite different from what they think to our Papas and Mamas!

Mama was on the platform at Euston, looking more beautiful than ever. She always looks so sweet as well as so beautiful, that the porters run about for her twice as fast as they do for anybody else, though she always forgets to tip them—on purpose, I think.

I dare say she feels that a smile from her is as good as twopence from anybody else, and she's quite right.

She was in plain navy serge, with a close motor

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bonnet and a long, flowing veil, and yet she looked like a queen, so tall and so happy!

I clung to her, I wanted to make her tell me, there and then, that it would be all right, and that I shouldn't be forced to marry Sir Lionel, but of course I couldn't.

She was as merry as a schoolgirl, and she kissed me so affectionately, and she packed off Miss Trood to Brook Street with the luggage in a taxi-cab, and took me straight to Bond Street in the brougham.

She smiled at me and took hold of my hand when we were driving out of the station.

"My dear child," she said, "how well you're looking. Think of it. I haven't seen you since November!"

"Oh, Mama, why didn't you come down for Christmas?" I said.

She laughed, and blushed as prettily as a girl, and put her finger on her lip. Then, as if suddenly making up her mind to confide in me, she said:

"Oh, well, you're grown up now"—these words sounded like a knell to me—"and so I can tell you. Poor, dear old Papa was so hard up, and we were in such really f-f-frightful difficulties, that—well, we couldn't. We had to keep very quiet indeed.

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So we ran down to Brighton to the Métropole, and had, oh, a dreadful time!"

And she cast up her pretty blue eyes and looked too sweet for anything.

I didn't think it sounded dreadful at all, but I didn't like to say so. Mama was very confidential, but she has a way of shutting herself up if one goes too far with her, and I wanted her to be very expansive indeed.

"And it is all right now, Mama?" I asked.

She smiled again directly, her cheeks forming those pretty dimples that made her look so young.

"Right? Oh, dear, yes; everything is going on wheels, my dear!" she said, with a little sigh of happiness.

Again I felt that awful tightening round my heart, that I had had two or three times lately, but I didn't dare to say anything yet.

"Am I to be presented this year?" I asked.

She laughed.

"Of course you are, and we have to hurry things through. I gave the orders about your dress this morning. You will look perfectly sweet, dear. White trimmed with silver, and——"

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"Oh, Mama, won't that be dreadfully expensive? And it won't be of any use afterwards, you know!"

Mama laughed so prettily, showing all her lovely front teeth, and putting her head archly on one side.

"Oh, yes, it will," she said.

I felt that I was stifling.

"How?" I said.

But Mama didn't answer. She began telling me all about the dress she had ordered, and about the trouble she had had over the trimming, and by the time her rambling story was over we were at Russell and Allen's.

I suppose I was tired after my journey, but the whole day's shopping was just a confused blur of stuffs and hats and gloves and shoes and what Mama calls frillies.

Long before it was over I felt that I was being treated like a doll, having my things tried on, and admired, and sent home and paid for, without any regard to what I myself liked or wanted.

Again and again I had a horridly dressed-up feeling as I stood with hats on my head and sunshades in my hand, that Mama liked and bought. And again and again I said that I didn't want so many things, when I heard her give her orders in dozens.

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But Mama was so happy, and so busy giving orders and making difficulties, and approving and disapproving, that my little bleat of remonstrance was not noticed by anybody. The women who took the orders smiled at me, but they did not listen to me, only to Mama, who had a purseful of bank-notes, which she paid away with the prettiest air of not knowing exactly how much she was paying.

But when she made up her accounts this evening, when we got home, I found that she remembered every single purchase, and the details of it, and how much she had paid, without the help even of her bills.

I got more and more miserable as the day went on, and at luncheon, which we had in a shop, I tried to get Mama to give me some explanation of her spending so much money on me. But she laughed and went on eating chicken, and just patted my arm with a confidential nod, and would not enter into particulars.

I was making up my mind for a firm stand against that horrible thing which I saw coming towards me. But I got no opportunity, for when we got home Mama declared that she was so tired she could not speak.

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But really she looked as fresh as a daisy ; it was I who was tired.

She rushed into my room to look at me before I went down to dinner, and she pulled my hair about with her own hands, and put a necklace of pearls round my neck and a rose in my white dress.

And then I found that we were not to dine alone. There were two ladies I knew by name, friends of hers, and a nice man, whose name was Major Cleeve.

And there was Sir Lionel Eberhard.

I felt stupefied when I saw him, and I looked towards the door for Papa, that I might speak to him, and beg him to stop what was going on.

But Papa did not come, and we all went in to dinner, and I, though I was not taken in by Sir Lionel, had to sit by him.

I don't know what happened at dinner. I felt stunned.

I only know I scarcely spoke, for Mama scolded me when they were all gone, and told me that ill temper would spoil the prettiest girl.

Then she asked me straightforwardly, coldly, with a frank look into my eyes, how I liked Sir Lionel.

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"I don't like him at all," I said hoarsely. "But I like Major Cleeve."

Mama looked at me with a little shrug.

"Major Cleeve is married," she said frigidly.

"What difference does that make?" I said.

Mama said nothing for a moment, but I saw that she grew paler, and I caught sight of my face in the glass on my dressing-table, for she had followed me into my room, and I saw that I was looking quite unlike myself, wild and bold and mad.

"What's the matter with you?" she said.

But she didn't laugh as she generally does; it seemed as if she tried to, but could not.

She took me suddenly by the shoulders and made me sit down, and said she would do my hair herself. I tried to prevent her, because I knew she didn't know anything about it, and that she would hurt me; but she persisted, and untied the ribbon and took out the frames for the front, and pulled out some of the hair with the hairpins as she took them out.

She talked all the time, so that I should not be able to say anything.

"Léonie shall put your hair up to-morrow," she said, when she had taken up one of my brushes and

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was hurting me horribly with it, scratching my ears and my forehead and hitting my head with the ivory part. "Of course you must have it up now."

"Mama, why did you buy me so many things to-day, so many more than I wanted?" I asked.

I whisked suddenly round, making the brush fall out of her hand, and dragging my poor hair away from her clutches.

We stared into each other's faces, and we both breathed so noisily that any one outside the door might have heard us, I should think.

Mama saw she must tell me everything, and indeed it didn't matter, for I knew, I couldn't help knowing.

"Surely you know," she said at last, putting her hand on my shoulder. And then I found out that she was not quite so much at ease as she pretended, for I could feel her hand trembling. "Papa told you about Sir Lionel Eberhard's offer."

"But, Mama, Mama, I can't marry him; I don't like him."

"Hush!" Mama came close to me, and bent down, and said quite softly in my ear, "Don't cry out and make a fuss about it. It makes me miserable. And I want you to be happy, and I think you

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will be. He admires you enormously, and he will treat you like a princess." I shook my head, and she then asked sharply, "I hope those silly creatures down there, Kelly and Miss Trood, haven't been telling you a lot of absurd stories?"

"No. I haven't heard any stories. What stories are there for me to hear?"

Mama looked half relieved, half vexed.

"Oh, I don't know that there are any," she said, "except that there are always ill-natured people to make things up about a man who is rich."

"Is it true he's a money-lender?"

"There! They have told you something!"

"Surely I have a right to hear, not only something, but everything," I said quite grandly.

Mama seemed impressed for a moment, and looked at me as if I were somebody else. Then she said quickly:

"Very well. I would rather not have told you, but as you say, you have a right to know, and so you shall. Your father's affairs were desperate, and he tried to get a loan from Sir Lionel on the property at Fouroaks. That was the business that took them down there last week. He and Sir Lionel and one of the lawyers. But the security was not good,

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for there are burdens on the property already—mortgages. I don't suppose you understand what that means?"

I did in a way, and I said nothing, but let her go on:

"Well, when Sir Lionel saw you, he fell in love with you, and before the day was over he proposed for you to Papa. He was very generous, let us have all we wanted and more, and made the handsomest offers, so that, no matter what may happen, you will be all right. There, that's all."

"But I refused him!"

Mama made a little grimace.

"Of course you did. What else could such a child as you are do but refuse? Nobody could expect you to do anything else, ignorant as you are. But luckily for you your parents were at hand to arrange things for you. And so it's all settled."

"No, no, I won't marry him. I hate him."

"My dear pussy, you haven't any choice. When a man as rich as Sir Lionel asks a girl to marry him, there is no question of refusal or acceptance, believe me. Naturally, he is not a man to make a very good impression at first sight upon so young a girl as you are."

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"I did like him at first sight. It's since that I don't like him. He is so ugly! I believe his teeth are false."

"Nonsense, child. We all have false teeth when we get his age."

"His age!" I caught at the words. "Yes, how can I marry a man old enough to be my father?"

"It's a much better look out for a girl to marry a man older than she is than to tie herself for life to a selfish boy."

Did Mama know anything about Jack, I wondered!

"Well," said I, "you'll see."

"Yes," said Mama, cutting the word off sharply, as if using a knife. "We shall see."

She kissed me quickly and went away, and for a little while I sobbed and sobbed. I wouldn't marry Sir Lionel, I wouldn't, I wouldn't.

But all the time I knew that I should have to, that there wasn't any question about it. That's why Papa keeps out of the way. He knows Mama can do anything she likes with anybody, and so he's just left it to her.

And so presently, when I couldn't see out of my eyes, I just opened my diary and wrote it all down.

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I've just read it all through from November last, and I can't believe it was I, Cis, that wrote all those entries about my ponies and my puppies just before Christmas.

This is growing up, I suppose! Oh, I hate it all! I hate it all!

I won't keep my diary any more! It's all too dreadful.

CALAIS, *March 2nd.*

I WAS married yesterday : I'm eighteen to-day ; and I wish I was dead !

I've had two horrible months, all like a fever, being driven about and played with, and seeing things I didn't want to see, and hearing music I didn't want to hear, so that it seems as if I had been dreaming all the time, just to wake up now and then to feel horribly, horribly frightened and shocked.

And at last I began to think I should be glad when it was all over and I could be quiet and rest.

Rest ! Shall I ever rest ? Shall I ever be quiet ? Or shall I go on and on till I go mad ?

Oh, Mama, Mama, how could you let me do it ? Why didn't you let me know ?

And, Papa, how meanly you left your daughter in the lurch ! It wasn't like you, it wasn't fair !

It's twelve o'clock, and I am alone at last, thank God ! I can see Sir Lionel walking down the street

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with that heavy, waddling walk, swinging first to one side and then to the other, as if he were crushing things as he goes along. Oh, I wish he would never come back!

I'm so tired that I can scarcely keep my eyes open; but I can't rest, I must just write, write, and so I've opened my poor old book and I'm going on just where I left off two months ago, when I first knew that I had been sold.

Sold! Sold! Papa and Mama wouldn't like to be told that by any one but me! Mama didn't mind me when I told her so yesterday, before I came away. She just laughed, and told me I was a silly child, and said that some day I should be thankful I had had such a good mother, who went on steadily doing her duty in spite of difficulties put in her way by the very people who ought to help her! And then she began to cry, and I know people must have said, when they saw her red eyes, how sad it was for Lady Rushbury to part from her daughter.

But I knew better. She was just angry that I'd found her out.

Oh, how hard I'm getting! I suppose I ought not to be so hard, and to feel as bitter as I do against

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them both. But surely they ought not to have done it! Surely they, who knew all about it, ought not to have sold me into this! It's horrible, horrible! Not to love the man one marries—that must be hard. But to hate him! And I do hate him!

I hate it all. I dread the future. I can't bear it even now. I feel as if I were stranded on a desert island, with only a wild animal as companion. If only I had the courage I would run out of the hotel and down to the harbour and jump into the sea.

But I daren't even go outside. And I know some one would come after me, and bring me back again, and it would be worse than ever.

If only Mama had let me bring old Kelly with me instead of this horrid new maid, whom I don't like! But she knew better. She knew I was going to be miserable, and she wouldn't trust me with a friend. Poor old Kelly! And to think I didn't like her to kiss me! Oh, if I'd known what was in store for me, how grateful I would have been to her for loving me like that, for being sorry for me!

I suppose she and Miss Trood both knew that I should have to be miserable. That's why they cried on New Year's Day.

And Jack! *He* might have saved me. I'd have

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run away with him if he had wanted me to. We could have lived quite well on what he has, I feel sure. Five hundred a year is surely not so very little; and he has that, or nearly that, I know. But though he was so nice, coming to see us at Brook Street so often, and saying how lovely I looked with my hair up, and wishing things could have turned out differently, he never said a word about marrying me, but took it all for granted, and congratulated me.

He said he should meet us at Monte Carlo. I wonder whether he will dare to look me in the face! I know I shan't be able to look in his!

And Papa! When I begged him to stop Mama, he asked me why I was so obstinate, and whether there was anybody else. And when I spoke of Jack, he said he was a selfish cub, and that whoever I married would be a better husband for me than he would be.

I think that was just the last straw. Until then I had hoped and hoped that I should be able to crawl or scramble out of this horrible thing somehow. But when Papa said that, and meant it, I knew that it was of no use struggling.

I suppose brothers are always nasty about their

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sisters' marriages. Penrhyn told me I didn't deserve half my luck, and that he hoped I wouldn't be such a fool as Marjorie had been.

I asked Mama about Marjorie afterwards, and at first she put me off; but afterwards she said that, as I was going to be married, I might as well know. And she said that Marjorie had run away from her first husband, Mr. Stoke, who was a very rich man, and that she had been divorced and had married Sir Giles Luffenham, who was unkind to her.

"It's a lesson to all young wives," Mama said, "not to be discontented and not to run away from their husbands."

"But what was Mr. Stoke like, Mama?" I said. "He looked horrid. I can just remember him at the wedding. I remember I was sorry for Marjorie then."

Mama said stiffly that Mr. Stoke was Marjorie's own choice, and that there was no reason why she should not have been happy with him.

"He is a great racing man," she said; "and as Marjorie has sporting tastes too, there was a bond of union between them, or there ought to have been. But she was foolish, and she has ruined her life. Now no one will speak to her."

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Poor Marjorie! These last words of Mama's made me shudder when she spoke them. Did she mean that a daughter was no longer a daughter to her when she did anything Mama disapproved of?

And I wondered whether Marjorie's "choice" had been like mine!

I said nothing, and Mama went on, improving the occasion:

"Girls should not think, when they marry, that they will have everything they want, and that there will be nothing in life to put up with. That is an impossible state of things. There must always be little causes of disagreement between the most devoted husband and wife; but the wise ones make the best of it, and remember the reasons why they married, and are content with something less than ideal happiness."

This was two days before my marriage, and I was past caring what I said about it.

"I shall certainly not be ideally happy, and as the only reason for my marriage was that you and Papa wanted it, it is you, not I, who will have to ask yourselves whether you are satisfied with the result of it," I cried.

Mama looked rather shocked.

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"My dear Cis," she said, "you mustn't talk like that. You don't suppose we should have allowed you to marry a man a girl couldn't care for, do you?" she said.

"Why, yes, certainly I do. I can never care for Sir Lionel, and I can't pretend to."

"Well, if he is satisfied, that is all right," said Mama quickly. "The French proverb says: 'Il y a toujours un qui baise, et un qui tend la joue.' It is much better for the wife to be the one who offers her cheek to be kissed, and for the husband to be the one who kisses."

"Ugh!" said I, and Mama promptly began to talk about something else.

I only saw poor old Kelly once while I was in town, and then Mama stood by all the time she was there. I could see that Kelly wanted to tell me something, and that Mama knew it and would not let her. She had worked me a little pincushion as a wedding-present, and I promised her to keep it always on my dressing-table. It is there now. I have a sort of superstition about it, and I wouldn't lose it for the world. It is the one present, of all those I've had, that makes me feel a lump in my throat when I look at it. Poor old Kelly, that I thought such a bore

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when she was with me! What would I give to have her with me now! How I would cry, with my arms round her neck! I couldn't tell her all I've felt and all I've suffered; but it would be just enough to cry, and to feel her arms round me.

Even Miss Trood was kept away from me! If I had only known!

They both wanted to tell me something, I am sure; and now I think it would have been something that might have prevented all this.

Would it though? Even if I had known how horrible it was all going to be, could I have stopped it? Could I have let Mama look as she would have looked?

There was only one thing I could have done, I could have run away.

But where could I have run to? And what would have happened when I was caught? I should have had to go through with it, I suppose, just the same. With Sir Lionel angry instead of as he is!

But that would have been better. Oh, yes; it would have been better!

Oh, I can't think of it all without crying again!

To think that only yesterday morning I was still just little Cis Rushbury, living in a fairytale! And

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now—now I know it was all, all wrong, and silly, and that, instead of being the princess they pretended, I am just a broken-hearted thing—not a woman, but a miserable helpless animal. I should like to go and hide myself somewhere out of the light, and cry and cry until I was too stupid to think.

And to know that I must go on with it, that no change can come except for the worse. For it will be worse, and it must be, when he finds out how I feel. And I can't hide it for ever! Already he must guess, I think.

But I don't think he even cares.

It's horrible!

I used to wish I were a man, so that I could ride in steeple-chases. I don't wish that now; no, no. But I wish I had never been born at all. The world is not the place I thought it was.

I should have liked to be a Roman Catholic, so that I could be a nun.

Should I still wish that, if it had been—Jack?

I don't know. Oh, I don't know. I think I should wish it all the same.

I don't understand it all yet; that yesterday I should have been free, and that now I can never be free again. Why should women have to suffer

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like this? And why shouldn't they know it, and have their choice?

Oh, Mama, you treated me badly; you sold me! It wasn't fair!

I wonder, if the clergyman who married us had known, whether he would have performed the ceremony just the same! I am afraid he would. I am afraid he would have been more shocked by the idea of his having any responsibility in the matter, than by what he had to do in tying a girl of eighteen for life to a man nearly fifty.

It seems strange that, though it happened only yesterday, I am scarcely able to remember anything about the wedding. It is just a hazy, mazy recollection of a crowded church, and a rush, and then another crowd outside, and then another crowd at Brook Street.

And then Mama, looking different, as if she too, at last, was a little frightened at what she had done, when I nearly fainted in my room while they were dressing me to come away.

She was very kind then, and gave me one last lecture very nicely and affectionately. She told me I must be a brave girl, and try to please my husband, and that I must remember that, even if at first I was

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not very happy, I must put a brave face upon the matter, and remember that the first duty of a gentlewoman was to show a brave spirit and to keep a smiling face, and to make herself respected as well as loved.

I think that, while Mama was talking to me, Papa was talking to Sir Lionel, for I found them together at the foot of the stairs when I came down; and Papa was looking grave and Sir Lionel angry.

Papa looked very nervous when he kissed me, and he came to the carriage door and held my hand, and looked at me so kindly, so anxiously, and told me to cheer up, and to enjoy myself, and to write to him and tell him all I did.

And then we drove away, and I was glad, at least for the moment, to have got out of all that crowd. But when I looked at Sir Lionel I was not glad any longer. He was irritated by something Papa must have said to him, and at first he was quite cross and snappish. I didn't care really; I liked it better than being kissed by him.

He was kind to me on the journey, and I did my best to talk and not to be frightened by that lonely feeling which was growing stronger every minute. For I felt exactly as if I were with a stranger, to

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whom I had to exert myself to be civil when he was boring me. But it seemed so strange to me to see him, when we got to Dover, turn round to stare at a very smartly dressed woman who looked like an actress, and to see him follow her to get a good look at her face.

There was something about this that I could not help noticing, and it disgusted me. It made me suddenly understand something of the sort of thing Papa must have said to him, and it made me tell myself again that Papa ought not to have let me marry Sir Lionel.

Then we went on board the turbine, and I had to be shut up in one of those little cabins, when I should have liked to walk about and feel the sea-breeze in my face.

But Sir Lionel was sea-sick, so I left him with the steward, and stole out and had a delicious walk on the upper deck. The people looked at me so much that I felt uncomfortable, and wondered whether they knew who I was. But of course it was only that they all guessed I was just married, for one's new things "give one away," as Penrhyn calls it.

Mama and Léonie had tried hard to make me in-

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terested in my clothes; but I didn't care what they put on me. I have always hated to be dressed up, and now I feel just like a doll, for everything I have is much too smart to be worn. All my clothes look like those one sees in the ladies' newspapers, only fit to be looked at. This very morning gown that I have on now is absurd: white cashmere, which will get soiled directly, and ever so much lace, and lots of silly little pale blue ribbons going in and out of the lace and getting in my way as I write.

I didn't want to put it on, but that horrid Hanway laid it on the bed for me this morning, and it wasn't worth arguing about, so I let her put it on me.

I wonder whether Sir Lionel means to go on to Paris to-day. He stayed here last night because he was so ill crossing that he was afraid of the train journey.

I could almost have laughed at him for being seasick. It was rather a rough crossing, but I thought it lovely. Partly, I dare say, because I was able to get away out of the cabin and be by myself. But I took care not to say what I thought.

Here he comes! I can see him in the distance. I should know him by his walk anywhere.

How hideous he is! I wonder I never guessed

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that his hair was dyed! Shall I ever get not to mind? Not to mind anything, I mean!

I must try, try hard. Mama is right. It's underbred not to be brave, and not to look as if one didn't mind.

I won't show anything of what I feel; no, I won't, I won't, I won't.

But it's a comfort to be able to write what is in my heart. I shall go on with my diary again, only now I shall have always to write in the mornings instead of at night.

Good-bye, Diary dear. He's coming into the hotel. I must lock you up.

PARIS, *March 6th.*

WE have been here four days, but this is the first time I have been able to get out my diary and write in it. We came on here after the one night at Calais, and the train journey seemed awfully long, because I was so tired and sleepy.

The rooms here are the handsomest I ever saw in a hotel, and are much better furnished than either of Papa's houses. Sir Lionel says we have the suite used by royalty. He prides himself, of course, on having what is best everywhere. We always have the best box in a theatre, and the best room at a restaurant; and, of course, on a train journey we have a compartment to ourselves.

I should like it much better if we just took our seats with everybody else, and I hope we shall presently, when Sir Lionel gets as tired of my society as I am of his.

And yet I am afraid, when that happens, it won't

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be so much better as I had hoped at first. Sir Lionel is, I am now sure, a very bad-tempered man, and so used to having his own way in the smallest thing, that he is rude, almost brutal, if he is thwarted in any way.

I take the greatest pains to be always amiable and always smiling; but, although we have not yet been married a week, I think he is beginning to be tired of me already. At least, he sometimes speaks very abruptly to me, as he did not at first, although I can see that he is proud of me in a way, and always very anxious that I shall look my best.

This, I am sorry to say, I have lamentably failed to do since I came to Paris. I get so dreadfully, dreadfully tired, that I always look very pale, and am so languid that it is a great relief when we get into a fiacre, and I can sit back quietly and don't have to talk.

Luckily for me, Sir Lionel is rather deaf on the right side, so when we are driving I don't have to talk, but only to smile.

I love these little fiacres, though Sir Lionel thinks they are not good enough for him, and does nothing but grumble at them all the time. I have seen a great many Paris streets like that, and one day

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we went out in a motor-car to Versailles, and that was interesting. But it was very cold, and I felt quite frozen when I got back, and Sir Lionel looked at me as if he thought me very ugly.

So I was!

In the evenings he takes me to horrid places that I don't like, music-halls and cafés where they sing. They are crowded and stuffy, and full of the most horrid-looking people. Women with painted faces, who stare at Sir Lionel and even talk to him, and who laugh at me.

And men who all look like Sir Lionel, except the Englishmen, who sometimes look at me as if they were surprised to see me there.

I am surprised myself, and so, I think, would Papa be if he were here.

I told Sir Lionel yesterday evening at dinner that I didn't like the French idea of gaiety, though I had heard so much about it, and he laughed, and said I need not go to any more theatres unless I liked.

I think, though, I might like to go to a proper theatre, where they played a piece, though I dare say I shouldn't be able to understand it very well. But it seems strange, when Mama would not even let me go to the Palace music-hall in London, that

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here I should go to all these music-halls, where I know she would be shocked if she could see me.

Just because I am married I am supposed, I see, to be able to go to any horrid place in the world. Marriage seems horrible altogether, as far as my experience goes. It is true I have only been married less than a week, but the whole world seems changed for the worse.

I can see that Sir Lionel thinks me a prig, and though at first it amused him to hear what I thought—though I was always careful not to say one-half of it—now he frowns at me a little, and stares as if he wanted to tell me to look different.

Altogether I feel rather like a wild plant pulled up out of its native wood and planted in a hothouse, where it at once becomes nothing more or less than a weed!

And I wish some one would pull me up by the roots and throw me out again!

PARIS, *March 9th.*

FOR three evenings now I have had my evenings to myself, Sir Lionel going out directly after dinner, and not coming back until long after I have gone to bed. I sat up the first evening until I fell asleep in my chair, and after that he told me not to tire myself like that.

It was lucky for me that I didn't wait up last night, for he never came home at all. It appears he could not make the hotel-porter hear, so the French hotels are really less well managed than in England, for I am quite sure in London such a thing could not have happened.

However, it did not matter to me, as I had a lovely night, and did not know anything about it till this morning.

We always have *café complet* in our room, and the French *déjeuner à la fourchette* at eleven, and Sir Lionel came in just in time for that.

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He was very apologetic indeed; and he brought me a fan, which is very pretty, with pearl sticks and lace and a little painting in the middle. But really I have so many handsome things that I don't want already, that I found it difficult to be grateful enough.

Sir Lionel was very nice indeed to me at breakfast, telling me a lot of interesting things about the different Paris buildings, so that I liked him better than usual. And I was feeling better, and therefore looking better, and he told me so, and seemed pleased that I did not mind his having left me.

I told him frankly that I was not frightened, because I fell asleep and never woke up till morning.

Now that Sir Lionel goes out after dinner I can write in my diary in the evening instead of the morning, which I like better. And I can write my letters. I take great care not to tell them things I think they would not like to hear, about my impressions of what I see. I can't help feeling rather bitter about it, for they might have known Sir Lionel was not the right husband for me; but since they saw no harm in giving me to him, it is of no use to tell them things which might make them uncomfortable.

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But I shall speak out my mind very plainly when I see them again! Oh dear, when will that be? And what shall I have to go through first? I do feel so horribly, horribly lonely, and sorry for myself. It would have been so easy to make me happy, and they have taken such elaborate pains to make me miserable!

I hope Sir Lionel really helped them very handsomely; since I had to be sold, I hope I was not *sold cheap*.

I have had a tiring day. We drove out to see the races this afternoon, and I wondered what poor Miss Trood would say to my going to races on a Sunday. But they don't think anything of that here.

It was very bright, and the ladies were so beautifully dressed that it was amusing to look about one. Sir Lionel pointed out to me a great many exquisitely dressed women who, he said, were the leading Paris beauties, but they are not people one would like to know, though they look so pretty.

One of them, who was dressed in what looked like a suit of flexible armour over a very pale pink dress, with the most enormous hat I ever saw, made Sir Lionel come to the side of her motor-car and talk to her.

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She seemed to know him quite well, and I could see that she was making him laugh very much, amusing him, and making herself very amiable. And I wondered why he had not married a woman like her instead of me. It is impossible to imagine two women more unlike each other than his wife and this woman, whom he evidently admires very much.

When he came back to the voiture I was in, which was a little hired victoria with a coachman who wore a cockade in his hat, I asked him who the lady was in the pink dress, as if I had not seen him talking to her.

At first he would not tell me, but by and by he said she was a well-known actress, and considered the best-dressed woman in Paris. He said he would take me to the theatre to see her. Although I wanted to go to the theatre, I was not so very anxious to go after his saying that. I don't know exactly why, except that it seemed strange for him to know her so well and to talk and laugh with her before me, and then to answer me as if she was not the sort of person for me to know.

I certainly am not jealous, but it does not seem quite right that I should be taken to see her act. At least, it makes me rather uncomfortable.

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I wish Mama were here.

Sir Lionel made some bets for me, and I know that he also made some for Mademoiselle Diane, as he calls her. I lost every time, but it did not much matter, as it was not my money. But I should like to have some money of my own, instead of having everything paid for by Sir Lionel, and I am hoping that, when we get to Monte Carlo, I shall be able to win some for myself at the gaming-table.

We have had dinner, and Sir Lionel has gone out, and now I have written this I am going to write to Papa and to dear old Kelly.

I shall be very careful what I say to *her*, or she would cry all night!

PARIS, *March 11th.*

YESTERDAY morning Sir Lionel took me out shopping, and bought me a lot of things I do not want. He seemed rather annoyed because I left the choice of everything to him, or else chose just what he considered the wrong things. But really I can't like these enormous hats, with a whole forest of birds and vegetation on them, and I know quite well that I should look perfectly ridiculous in them.

He says what I want is "style," so that I see quite plainly I shall never reach his ideal! And yet, was there so much "style" about me that first day, when he saw me escaping upstairs in Kelly's old ulster, with one shoe off and a lovely fringe of wet petticoats dangling round my ankles?

In the evening he took me to a real theatre, and there I saw Mademoiselle Diane on the stage. I see that her name in the programme is Mademoiselle D—— M——.

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She acted beautifully, and though I could not understand it all, I could see that she was fascinating. And her dresses were most beautiful and just right.

Sir Lionel asked me what I thought of her, and I said I thought she was very graceful and charming.

"So she is," he said.

"I suppose those dresses she wears, that look so simple," I then said, "must cost a great deal."

"She spends about twice as much upon her dress as any other woman in Paris. Perhaps you know what that means," said he.

I have no doubt it means a great deal, but I didn't care to say any more about it, and presently Sir Lionel went out, and I sat in the box by myself through the next two acts.

When he came back, Sir Lionel asked me whether I should mind staying a few days longer in Paris, and I said, "No."

He said he might have a little business to do, and hoped I should not mind if he left me alone a little. And, of course, I said, "No"; but to-day I have felt rather lonely, though I must acknowledge that Sir Lionel did not forget me, as I received this afternoon another present from him about which he had said

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nothing, boxes and boxes of what Mama calls frillies, the prettiest and daintiest I ever saw.

I wonder he never said anything about what was coming. I feel rather surprised and even hurt that my own things were not considered good enough by Sir Lionel, and to tell the truth I don't quite like all these silk and lace underclothes. It is bad enough to have to feel dressed up outside, but the feeling of being dressed up inside as well is not nice.

With these cobwebby petticoats and satin corsets trimmed with lace and gold and silver ribbon, I shall feel more like a doll than ever!

I have just written to Papa, and to Mama too. I told Papa about the places I'd seen, and the theatre I went to last night, and about Sir Lionel having been shut out one night, and about his having gone away on business till to-morrow.

And to Mama I gave a long description of the races, and of what the people wore; and I told her all about the things Sir Lionel sent home for me to-day. Those things will interest her more than they do me, though even she, I think, who is so very fond of pretty things, will agree with me that it is rather absurd to wear things that look as if a good pull would tear them into shreds.

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There are some silk stockings so fine you can see through them, as if they were muslin, with the fronts delicately embroidered and set with tiny diamonds and little pearls. I laughed at the idea of wearing them, and I think even Mama will too!

PARIS, *March 12th.*

WHEN Sir Lionel came back this morning, having been away since yesterday morning on business, I made a most unpleasant discovery. I thanked him for his presents, and when he said, "What presents?" I showed him one of the boxes with the frillies and things. He turned quite a deep yellow colour, and for the moment I didn't know what to think. It was as if he had never heard of the things. And then he laughed, and said quickly he was glad I liked them, and then he went out of the room.

And a horrid idea came into my head, and I looked through the boxes again, and I found, as I had half thought I should do, one of his visiting cards with some words scribbled on it in pencil:

"A la belle déesse Diane, de la part du plus humble de ses adorateurs."

I wished I had never learned French!

I threw the card into the box again and shut it

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up, and sat down trembling all over, wondering what I should do.

Of course I couldn't tell him that I knew, now, that the things were not intended for me, but for the actress Mademoiselle D—— M——.

And suddenly I knew that I had misunderstood several things; and that when Sir Lionel couldn't get into the hotel at night it was because he hadn't tried to; and that when he went away "on business," it was the business of amusing himself that occupied him.

It was so deeply humiliating to discover this, to know that all my efforts to please him, and to be amiable and submissive, had been thrown away, since I had failed to make him even respect me, that I felt I could have died of shame.

I forgot even that I hated him and feared him; I could feel only the cruelty of treating me so.

Of course I had not been supposed to know anything, but the least thought would have told him that I must find out, especially when he was not even careful to give the right address for his presents to be sent to.

He had got me a lace-trimmed morning gown at the same shop where he ordered the things for

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Mademoiselle D—— M——, and he had not taken the trouble necessary to prevent the mistake the shop-people had made in sending the actress's things to me!

What was I to do? Should I say I was ill, and ask to be sent home?

This seemed the best thing to be done, but yet I dreaded to have to do it. For if I go home I must tell Papa and Mama everything; and there will be all the gossip and scandal. And how can I tell Sir Lionel I am ill, when he knows I am not?

Of course, to tell him what I know is not to be thought of. If I liked him, I could do it. I could beg or I could reproach. But as it is I couldn't. Oh, I couldn't say a word about it. I should suffocate if I tried to speak of it. And besides, the man who could behave like this to a girl he has just married would be brutal about it, I feel sure.

The whole thing is so horrible, to have taken me away from my people just to treat me like this, that I am almost stunned by it. I can't say I dislike him more than I did before, because that was scarcely possible in one way; but I am more afraid of him than I was. He seems to be so much worse than I had believed possible. Surely it was not

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worth while to marry me at all, when he can't treat me properly during the first fortnight of my married life?

Is it my fault at all? I don't think so. It's true I might have got a greater hold upon him if I had loved him; but how was that possible? I was *flung* into marriage, without being allowed to know what I was doing; and of course I realise that that was the only way it could have been done, and of course Papa and Mama had no idea how wicked he was.

And yet, didn't they know? What were those stories I heard about, that no one would tell me?

But surely they might have known, or guessed, how it was likely to end! Surely they couldn't suppose I should ever care for such a man! I did mean to try; I meant to try hard: and I was so submissive and gentle that I thought he would *help* me to like him, and that perhaps, presently, the feelings of disgust I can't help would die down and grow into gratitude for all the things he gave me.

But I see now that it could never have happened like that. I was trying to live in a fairy-tale again, and it broke down.

Now what shall I do? I have been wondering all day long.

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When Sir Lionel came back to the rooms, I had bathed my eyes and tried to look as if nothing had happened; and he brought up a little dog to show me, one that a man had brought to the hotel to try to sell.

I hadn't yet made up my mind what to do or what to say, so I behaved just as usual, which was perhaps the best thing.

And then this evening, at dinner, I summoned up courage to ask when we were going to leave Paris.

"Leave Paris? Don't you like it, then?" he asked quickly.

My voice was trembling very much as I said I was tired of it, and I wanted to go on at once. I saw by the expression of his face that he knew I guessed something, and he said very dryly that he should be detained in Paris on business for two or three days more; but that, if I preferred, I could go on to Nice by myself.

I was dismayed, for how could I take a journey all by myself to a place where I knew no one?

Then I think he suddenly felt sorry for me, for I was trying hard to be very brave; and he came round to me where I sat at the table, and put his

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hand on my shoulder, and told me that he had seemed to neglect me, and that he was sorry. But that his business should not make him inconsiderate any more.

And then the strangest thing happened that has ever come into my life. I had hated him till then, ever since my marriage, and I had never really liked him before.

But if, at that moment, he had taken me in the right way, if he had said, *nicely*, that he was sorry for the way he had treated me, if without exactly *confessing*, he had let me see that he knew he had done what wasn't right, but that he was really ashamed and anxious to do the right thing for the future, I should not only have forgiven him, but I should have liked him better, ever so much better than I had ever done before.

For just at that moment he seemed *human*, he seemed to make me understand that he could feel things that I could feel; there just seemed to have come a point where we might have *understood* each other, even if that understanding had not made us think very well of each other.

And just for the moment I seemed to see that, after all, I must be rather a bore to him with my

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ignorance and my dullness, and that there might be a great temptation for a man who had been self-indulgent all his life, in coming in contact again with brilliant women who had known him before, and who knew how to amuse him and to interest him as I could not do.

But, as it was, I could see that all he wanted was to prevent my bursting into tears and making a scene, and that he did not mean to go away from Paris, as he ought to have done when I wished it.

And so the little flicker of deeper feeling that had suddenly come into my heart died away again, and he went out to smoke his cigar, and I am left here to write this down, and to wonder, and wonder how it will all end!

PARIS, *March 16th.*

FOR two days Sir Lionel was very nice, and I almost began to think the worst was over. He took me to the Louvre, where I saw a great many things I had heard about from Miss Trood, and I enjoyed myself, though I could see he was bored.

And then we had a beautiful drive in a motor-car for miles and miles through the country round Paris, and finished up with the Opera in the evening.

I got a queer little letter from Mama, by which I saw that she was rather frightened. She underlined lots of words, and told me she was *very* glad Sir Lionel was so kind to me, and that I was doing my *best* to be amiable. And she said that I was to write to her *often*, and to tell her *everything*, and that I was *especially* to tell Sir Lionel that she hoped he would remember the deep and perfect *confidence* she felt in him, and in his kindness to me.

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And she put, as usual, a postscript to her letter, in which she said that Papa was going to write to Sir Lionel.

Unluckily, I could see that Sir Lionel was gradually getting bored again, and last night he went away on business again, and was away all night.

And the hopelessness of it all, and the horror of it, and the knowledge that I couldn't put things right made me cry my eyes out this morning. I felt so lonely, so miserable, and so disgusted, as much with myself as with Papa and Mama and Sir Lionel, that I felt as if I couldn't go on living unless I could find some way out of it.

It isn't even as if I had a nice maid with me. I can't bear Hanway, and I don't like the way she giggles and titters with Sir Lionel.

She is affected too, and so vain that she is always looking at herself in the glass. As it was Sir Lionel who engaged her (which I certainly should not have done, for I don't like her), I can see that she thinks a great deal more of pleasing him than of pleasing me. She dresses beautifully, quietly and with good taste, and the consequence is she gets addressed as "miladi," which she likes but I don't.

She has only one good point, and that is that she

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neglects her duties. I could not bear to have a maid I don't like always about me. But Hanway leaves me to get out most of my things myself, and when I want her it is generally Jones who has to go and find her for me.

I like Jones. He is always civil and bright, and ready and willing to do anything for me. Sir Lionel says he is a thief and a liar, but I sometimes wonder whether a servant who was absolutely truthful would suit him any better!

And as for honesty, money-lenders may be honest, I suppose, but nobody talks as if they thought them so!

I wonder who Sir Lionel lends money to! It must be to people who can pay very handsomely for his help, I should think, for I never understood before what being rich was like.

It is very different indeed from being like Papa and Mama, supposed to be rich, with so many expenses and claims that you really never have any money at all, and are always being worried for want of it.

Hanway never came near me at all this morning, for which I was thankful, as I was able to have my cry undisturbed. I was a long time dressing,

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and it was ten o'clock before I went into the sitting-room.

The sun was streaming in brightly through the windows, and when I saw a man standing in one of them bowing to me, I had no idea who it was.

Then he said :

"Don't you remember me, Lady Eberhard?"

And then he came out of the glare, so that I could see his face, and I felt that my heart leapt up, and I could almost have thrown my arms about him and kissed him!

Of course I couldn't really, but that was how I felt—just because I was face to face with somebody I knew!

And yet it was only Papa's lawyer, Mr. Calstock, whom I had only seen twice before—the first time down at Four Oaks, when he came with Papa and Sir Lionel, and then once more at Brook Street, when he came just before the wedding to see Papa about some business, connected, I think, with marriage settlements or something horrid of that kind. I remember that Sir Lionel had made an appointment which he did not keep, and that Papa and Mr. Calstock were both angry about it.

For the first moment I was only delighted, as I

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held out my hand and he came forward and took it. But the next my feelings had changed altogether. For that strange face of his, that can express so much, was full of grave kindness, and pity too; and on a sudden I remembered that I had been crying and that my face must show it, and I was ashamed and disturbed, so that the tears came to my eyes again.

This happened before he had let go my hand, and then, just for a moment, I know that my fingers seemed to tighten round his, as if I had found a friend at last in my wretchedness and did not want to let him go.

Of course I recovered myself the next minute, and I explained that seeing a friend from England unexpectedly was such a great surprise and pleasure that it quite overwhelmed me.

Then he looked at me gravely again. I wonder how old he is! Papa always calls him "Young Calstock," and I know that his father is still alive and still in the business; so that my Mr. Calstock—I can't help calling him that, because he is so nice to me—my Mr. Calstock can't be very old! I don't think I can tell men's ages. With women it is easier: while they only wash their faces they are

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young; when they use powder and paint they are middle-aged; and when they are either wrinkled or enamelled they are old.

Mr. Calstock has lines in his face, lines that look very deep and hard when he is not talking, but that go away altogether when he talks to me. And he has the kindest eyes I ever saw, just a little shaded by the glasses he wears. Of course he must be short-sighted, for he is not old enough to wear them for any other reason.

Perhaps he is about thirty? I'm quite sure he can't be anywhere near forty. I don't think people would call him handsome, except me, and I think him so because he is so nice to me; so grave, and even sometimes rather stern, but yet so kind that he makes me feel he would be the very person I should go to in any difficulty.

I am not even quite sure whether he is tall, or only about the middle height. I know he is dark, and quiet in manner.

I do like him so much that to know he is in the world makes me feel more comfortable. I mean that, if ever things were to get dreadfully, unbearably hard, it would be easy to go straight to him and to tell him everything, much, much easier than

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to tell everything to Papa or Mama, or indeed anybody.

That sounds as if he were quite the ideal of what a lawyer ought to be, or a doctor, or a clergyman—someone you can put your trust in.

And I believe he is.

Oh, it is so beautiful, when you have been feeling as if there were nobody in the world you could confide in, to meet some one who inspires you with the feeling I have for him!

When I told him how pleased I was to see him he did not smirk, or say he felt flattered, or anything silly like that, but instead he looked me full in the face, gravely and sternly too, though I knew that the sternness was not meant for me.

And I blushed and felt a little ashamed, for the very pleasure I felt in meeting him, and the way in which I showed it, were of course a confession.

He said something conventional, looking at me and frowning all the time, and then I asked him whether he was staying in Paris.

"Oh, no," he said; "I am only here on business with Sir Lionel. The Earl sent me."

"Papa?"

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"Yes. As soon as I have seen Sir Lionel I shall take the next train back and return to London."

"Oh, I'm so sorry!"

"I suppose there is nothing I can do for you in London?"

I shook my head.

"No," I said. "Only give Papa my love. I suppose you will see him at once?"

"Yes."

We didn't say anything else for a minute, and then I said quickly:

"You won't tell him anything about me to—to worry him, will you?"

Mr. Calstock frowned.

"I'm afraid I shall not be able to tell him that you are looking as well as you ought to look," he said.

"Well, you see me at a rather unfortunate moment," I explained. "I have a headache this morning. I don't think Paris suits me."

"I am sure of it," he said. "You should ask Sir Lionel to take you away."

I was afraid of betraying myself again, and indeed I believe I did in spite of all I could do.

"He has business to attend to which keeps him here," I said. And then I remembered that I had

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made a mistake, for if business had kept him here, he would have been at the hotel that morning. So I hurried blundering on: "I mean, business keeps him in France."

I felt so mortified to see that Mr. Calstock guessed or knew all about it, that I turned away and could not help beginning to cry again. It was so dreadful, so humiliating, to be caught like that! But he was kind enough to pretend that it was all right.

"Yes, of course," he said. "But it is hard upon you to be left by yourself so much. I think I shall ask Lord Rushbury to come and see you. You would like that, wouldn't you?"

My poor little pretence of being calm and happy flew away when he said that. I caught at the idea, in fact I jumped at it.

"Oh, if you could make him come!" I said, clasping my hands. But then I remembered, and I laughed a little. I knew now that I was betraying myself, but I felt that it really didn't so much matter, since he was a man, and a lawyer, and he must know all about Sir Lionel, and guess at the sort of thing that had happened. Besides, he had to report to Papa, and it was necessary that he should know the truth. "Just for a day! I—I should be so

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glad!" And then I broke off and laughed and shook my head: "But he won't come," I said.

And glancing quickly at Mr. Calstock, I saw that he agreed with me.

"Well, I shall tell him he ought to," he said in quite a sharp tone.

But I didn't mind the sharpness, for I knew it was not intended for me. And then, feeling suddenly that there was no use in trying to keep things from him, I said in a whisper:

"It wouldn't be any use. It might make things worse instead of better."

Mr. Calstock did not make any answer. He began to walk up and down the room, past the two windows, with his hands behind him, bending his head and looking over his glasses on the carpet. His lips were very tightly pressed together, and he frowned and looked so stern that, if I had not known him and felt so much confidence in him, I should have felt even more afraid of him than I do of Sir Lionel.

Quite suddenly he stopped short almost in the middle of the room. I was sitting upright in an arm-chair between the fireplace and the door that led into the bedroom, so that he could see me better

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than I him, for his back was to the light and I sat facing it.

"It's a bad business," he said in a low voice.

I kept back the tears, but I had to strangle a sob. Then he drew himself up and looked out at the balcony and began to drum softly on the table.

"But we must make the best of it," he went on. "You are a very brave lady, and we must see that your future, at least, is assured."

I jumped up, seized with a sudden impulse, and leaning upon the table at the other side of it, and looking at him over the basket of flowers that was on it, I said:

"What did he marry me for, Mr. Calstock?"

In the midst of his gravity and sternness, he looked at me and smiled, as if I had said something amusing.

"I don't think any one would find a difficulty in giving a reason for a man's wishing to marry you, Lady Eberhard," he said, so quietly that, although I knew what he meant, it scarcely sounded like the flattering speech it was.

"I mean," I said, "I should have thought quite a different type of woman would have suited him better—a woman who could talk and say amusing

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things, and dress well, and—oh, quite a different person altogether from me. I don't mean," I went on quickly, "that he is not kind to me, and very, very generous. He is. Still, I think he must find me boring sometimes."

Mr. Calstock looked rather astonished.

"You are very modest and very indulgent," he said.

"Yes," I said, "but——"

Then I stopped short. I felt that I was getting much too confidential, and that I must not say what was in my mind, that I was more indulgent than I could possibly have been if I had liked Sir Lionel better.

I think he guessed my difficulty, or at any rate he wished to prevent my feeling uncomfortable when I stopped.

"However," he said, "you must be protected. I know that Sir Lionel would be very sorry to have any sort of open quarrel with Lord Rushbury."

"Quarrel! Oh, no, there must be no quarrel," I said. "I hope that nothing in my letters made Papa think it necessary to interfere."

Mr. Calstock shook his head.

"No, no," he said. "It was no fault of yours."

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Sir Lionel has not completed the settlements he promised to make, that's all."

I seized the situation at once, and I said quickly: "I hope you haven't come to insist on his doing that? I would much rather it were left, indeed. I have nothing to complain of on the score of want of generosity."

"You haven't now, but you may have," said the lawyer. "I think you must understand that, little as you know about such things, Lady Eberhard."

I said nothing, for I could see what he was thinking, that if my hold upon Sir Lionel was so weak already, the time would not be long in coming when I should have no hold at all.

But this view made no difference to me. I hated the thought of forcing a man to provide for me, especially as I knew he had paid sums of money on my account. I did not wish to hear anything about this, but I knew that, if Sir Lionel were coerced, I should very soon have to hear about it.

"I would much rather it were left to him," I said earnestly.

"Well," said Mr. Calstock, "you have no choice, and I have none either. I am sent here on a certain errand, and I have to fulfil it; and I must add

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that, in my opinion, the errand is a very proper one. Sir Lionel has been anxious to improve his social position by marriage into the aristocracy, and now that he has succeeded, the least he can do is to fulfil a promise which only covers the usual ground of such affairs."

I said nothing. I was beginning to understand better just what had happened in the matter of my wretched marriage. Sir Lionel, anxious to marry a titled wife—that was what it came to—had met me at a time when he knew poor Papa was in a very tight place, and had made Papa's consent a condition of letting him have the help he wanted. Of course it was very wrong of Papa to give way, but I knew what the temptation must have been, and after all, it was not likely that he or any one else would have expected Sir Lionel to treat me badly so soon.

As I realised all this, sitting quite quietly, with my hands on the arms of my chair, I suddenly felt a mist before my eyes, and a tear trickled down my cheek.

I was horribly ashamed of this, for Mr. Calstock, standing with his back to the light, could see me, and I had borne up pretty well till then. I suppose

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I must have looked very, very miserable, for his voice, when he next spoke, was as tender and kind as if he had been my father and mother and old Kelly rolled into one.

"Poor child, poor child!" he said gently.

He was about two yards away, and I stretched out my hand impulsively. He came with one stride near enough to take my hand, and he lifted it to his lips and kissed it.

I could have thanked him. For there was a kindness, a tenderness, a friendliness in his voice and manner which showed me that I could trust him.

He had scarcely let go my hand when the door from the corridor opened and Sir Lionel came in.

Mr. Calstock was standing bolt upright, quite two yards away from me, with his glasses on, his hands behind him, looking the dry lawyer from top to toe.

I was sitting with the tears still wet on my face, looking, I suppose, very much scared.

Sir Lionel came in whistling, with a large bunch of beautiful roses in his hand. He stopped short and stared angrily at Mr. Calstock.

"Hallo!" he said very gruffly.

Mr. Calstock bowed.

"You will have been expecting me, Sir Lionel,"

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he said. "Lord Rushbury wrote to you yesterday announcing my visit."

Sir Lionel turned, without a word, frowning, to the side-table where his letters were always put. There was a great pile of them, to be dealt with by and by with the help of his secretary.

"I dare say the letter is here," he said shortly, almost rudely. "But I've not seen it. I've been called away from Paris on business, and I've only just got back. What do you want?"

Mr. Calstock did not answer. I was glad, for I felt myself taking sides with him against Sir Lionel in the most curious way, admiring his quiet dignity, in the face of the rudeness with which he was being treated.

I got up from my chair and went towards the door of the bedroom. Sir Lionel followed me, with a sort of half-muttered excuse to Mr. Calstock, and, opening the door for me, gave me the roses, kissing me as he did so. I was quite quiet, quite submissive, as usual, but I felt that I hated him for doing it. It seemed like a sort of challenge to the lawyer, who came as Papa's messenger, a daring proof that we were on perfectly good terms, and that we did not want any interference.

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Then he let me go out of the sitting-room, and I sat down, trembling, far enough away from the door not to hear what they said.

They talked together in very subdued tones, and I heard the rustling of papers of some kind. Presently Sir Lionel's voice grew louder, and showed that he was angry. Then I could hear Mr. Calstock speaking in a very hard, dry, and decisive tone, and then suddenly Sir Lionel raised his voice and almost shouted:

"Look here! I won't have any d——d lawyer daring to dictate to me!"

I felt as if I could scarcely breathe, for I knew that Mr. Calstock had been, must have been remonstrating with him on the way he was treating me. Though I thought perhaps it would make no difference, or even that it might make Sir Lionel more unkind to me, I was so glad. It was like a beautiful rush of fresh, warm air to feel that at last there was a real friend at work for me!

And then I could have cried to think that it was a stranger, a man who had scarcely seen me before, who was taking my part, and trying to make things better for me, and not my own people, my own parents!

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Oh, Papa! Oh, Mama!

After that the voices died down again, and I could only hear the murmur of the talk as before. But I knew that Sir Lionel was angry, and I knew also that Mr. Calstock was standing his ground.

And presently the door shut and there was silence, and I knew that the interview was over.

Would it make any difference? I wondered.

But I didn't have to wonder very long!

The *déjeuner* had been kept back for this consultation, or discussion, or whatever it was, and by and by Sir Lionel opened the door, and very sulkily called me into the sitting-room, where all traces of Mr. Calstock and his papers had disappeared.

Sir Lionel was sulky and disagreeable, more so, indeed, than he had ever been before to me. I was very quiet, and as he said nothing, I said nothing either.

He flung the rolls about, and spilt the coffee, in a way which would have made me laugh if I had not felt sick with fear. When *déjeuner* was over, and the waiters had gone away and the table was cleared, he stood on the hearthrug frowning, and looking oh! so horribly ugly and hateful, and he said:

"I see you've been complaining to your people!"

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I could only breathe in gasps, but I shook my head and said that I had not complained. He looked at me with a scowl as if he did not believe me.

"What did you say to them, to make them send this d——d fellow over to me? This Calstock? Sent him to worry me about settlements. Want to make me sign a will they got me to make. I don't think they'd have dared to worry me so soon if you hadn't set them on."

I was aghast. The idea of my wanting Papa or Mama to get Sir Lionel to make wills and settlements was too absurd.

"I know nothing about any will or any settlement," I said in a shaky voice. "I never heard of them till to-day. I'm sure Mr. Calstock can't have told you that I had anything to do with his coming!"

He scowled at me still.

"He dared to blow me up about my treatment of you. My treatment! Now what could he know of my treatment if you hadn't said anything about it?"

I stared at him, rather puzzled. Certainly Mr. Calstock could see that I was not happy, but I had not said so in my letters home.

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"I suppose he thought it strange I should be left alone so much," I said. "He came here expecting to find you, and then he heard that you had been away, and that it was not the first time. That is all I can suggest."

"Business has to be attended to," he said sulkily. "And your people quite see that when it's a question of their own business. Here is the will I was expected to sign, and here's a draft of the settlement I'm called upon to make. You're to have two thousand a year to make ducks and drakes of without interference. One knows what that would mean: Papa and Mama would see who got that. And then I'm to leave you the same income unconditionally, in case of my death before you. Unconditionally, mind. Not if I know it. I'm not going to leave money to be squandered by another husband. As long as you choose to remain with me, you shall have everything you can wish for. But I'll not be dictated to by anybody; I'll not sign away my income, or any part of it, at the dictation of a lot of beggarly, poverty-stricken lords and ladies who were only too glad to snatch at what I gave them, and to leave settlements to be arranged afterwards. By Jove! They ran after me like a lot of

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famished wolves, stuck to me like leeches, grasping and smiling at the same time. Nothing was good enough for me then. Now they've spent the money I threw them, they want more, more, and since it's too late to get it direct, they think they'll get it through you. But they won't, they won't. I'll see them d——d first."

I felt sick with horror and dismay. He had thrown some documents—I don't know whether they were papers or parchments—but they were big and bulky—down upon the table, and he frowned at me, and pointed at them, inviting or rather commanding me to look at them.

So I did. I went up to the table in such a staggering fashion that I almost fell against it, and I looked down at the things and saw that they were both prepared for him to sign, with the place left for Sir Lionel's name.

I tried to read a few words, but my eyes were too dim, and besides, I knew I should not understand any better than by his very clear explanation. But I bent down and pretended to read part of the documents, just to give myself time to get over the awful shock of hearing him speak like that of poor Papa and of Mama.

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It wasn't very new, all that he told me in that brutal way; of course I knew before that he had advanced them money, that they were very glad to have it, and that they married me to him because he was rich. But to hear it all like that, to have it thrown at me so rudely, so plainly, was dreadful.

At last I said, very quietly:

"Was it to ask you to sign these things that Mr. Calstock came?"

"Yes. However, he didn't get me to."

"You had promised to sign them, I suppose, before you married me?"

I did not think, as I said this, how biting it sounded. Sir Lionel looked at me quite savagely.

"I may have done, but I don't choose to be driven into keeping my promises. It ought to be enough that I have promised, and it should be left to my honour to keep my word."

"Yes, of course."

Sir Lionel waved his right hand contemptuously in the direction of the papers on the table.

"Instead of that, I am to be driven. I am not to be trusted to provide for my wife; I am not supposed to know how Lady Eberhard should be maintained. There is no satisfying you and your people."

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I had been leaning upon my hands, which I had placed on the table, as I bent down to look at the papers. Now I stood up.

"You know I had nothing to do with wanting you to do this? You know that I know nothing about money, and that I have never asked you for any?"

"Yes, I know that, of course. It's your people——"

I interrupted him:

"I am very sorry to have to say this, but I think you must have known, when you first thought of marrying me, that you would have a great deal of expense over it."

"Yes, well, I suppose so; but——"

I interrupted him again:

"I don't think, if you wanted to what they call 'do the thing cheaply,' that you would have chosen to marry an earl's daughter."

"Cheaply! D——n it! I——"

I was growing quite firm by this time, knowing that I must finish what I had to say now that I had got so far. I cut him off short a third time.

"You have never given me any reason to suppose that you begrudge any expense for your wife."

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"I don't. I only begrudge money given to outsiders."

I drew my breath sharply through my teeth. Though I refrained from openly resenting these insults to us all, they made me hate him as I had never hated him before. And yet I think I was perhaps not altogether sorry—certainly I was not surprised—to find that I had done him no injustice in my dislike.

"Well," I said, "whatever you have to give in the future for my expenses, you shall not be able to say that I tried to force it from you. These papers, you say, are meant to oblige you to give what you don't want to give?"

"I didn't say that. I only said I won't be forced to give. I prefer having the matter left to my generosity. You would not suffer if you chose to trust me instead of your parents."

"You can't expect me to trust anybody more than I do my parents. They have always tried to do their best for me——"

"And for themselves," put in Sir Lionel.

I went on without noticing his remark:

"And I can't feel anything but pity for them if sometimes they make mistakes. But at any rate

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you shan't have any more to say about these horrid papers. They only concern you and me, don't they?"

"Well, they are supposed to, but——"

"Well, see then. There's no more to be said about them. For they are done with for ever."

With the documents in my hands I went up to the fire, and kneeling down beside him, held them down with the tongs until the flame caught them.

Sir Lionel had had to make way for me on the hearthrug, and he now looked down at me in surprise, watching me in silence for a few moments. Then he laughed shortly.

"Best thing you could do," he said in a grudging, grumbling tone, by which I think he meant to intimate that I was an artful woman doing the wisest thing for herself.

But I think he did feel rather ashamed, for though he said no more, and let me go away without trying to detain me, he has been much nicer to me since.

But I can't forget this morning, and the things he said about Papa and Mama, and though I have done my best all day long to talk and look as if nothing had happened, I do really feel now that nothing he can ever do or say will make any difference.

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We have finished dinner and he has gone out, and I have had two hours to write my letters and my diary. I feel stupid after the exciting morning and the strain of the afternoon.

I wonder what Mr. Calstock will say to Papa! And I wonder when I shall see him again, Mr. Calstock I mean! Soon, I hope!

PARIS, *March 18th.*

I AM quite sure now that Sir Lionel, in spite of his being so angry with Mr. Calstock and saying such horrid things about them all, feels that he has behaved badly, and wants, in his way, which is not a very nice way, to make amends.

But I am not quite so submissive now, and whenever I can I avoid him.

He sent me in a lot of beautiful flowers and sweets to-day, and brought me a pretty bracelet, and when he had put it on my arm himself he said:

“See what you get by trusting me! You will be much better off than if your people had forced me to make settlements which you do not want.”

I said nothing to that, but just thanked him for the bracelet. But I don't like it. I hate jewellery. It will always be associated in my mind with this horrid marriage of mine, and besides, it makes Sir Lionel think he is behaving well and generously to

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me, when really it is only to please himself that he makes me wear these things.

To-night, at dinner, I wore my wedding diamonds, and Sir Lionel stared at me as I sat, gloating over the diamonds and me in a way that made me cold. I know he cannot understand how I hate them, and hate wearing them; and when he told me that every man admires a woman more in her diamonds than at any other time, it was on my lips to say that I preferred not to be admired like that.

This life is hateful, being dressed up like a doll to please a man I detest. I had hoped I was living down my feeling that I am degraded by it, but I am not. Sometimes I feel as if I must run away.

Unluckily, I have nowhere to run to, and no money.

I do wish Sir Lionel would go on to Monte Carlo, and that I could win some money.

I got a letter from Papa to-day, written as soon as he had seen Mr. Calstock. He is very angry with Sir Lionel, and calls him several names which made me think it wiser to burn the letter as soon as I had read it twice.

There is no need to pour oil on the flames, and I don't trust Hanway, who may read my letters, and

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perhaps tell Sir Lionel what they say. I begin to feel as if she were a wardress and I were a prisoner, for though she doesn't pay me any attention when I want her, I often find her rummaging among my things when I would like to be by myself, pretending she has mending to do—which, however, she never does.

Papa writes to say that he wishes he could do more for me, but that he doesn't like to interfere. He says that marriage is always difficult, and generally impossible, and that the only thing that can make it tolerable is money. He says that, having money, everything else will come right to me in time, in the ordinary course of things, and that the only real fear he has is lest Sir Lionel should not prove to be so rich as he is thought to be.

He says that Mama is thinking of coming to Paris for a day or two, but that perhaps I had better say nothing about it yet.

I certainly shan't.

PARIS, *March 20th.*

Two eventful days.

I was horribly tired and listless yesterday morning, and I refused to go out, saying that I had a headache.

While we were at *déjeuner*, a message was brought to Sir Lionel that a lady wanted to speak to him, and he went out, apologising to me for leaving me, and looking rather annoyed, I thought.

When I looked out of the window, I saw an open taxicab waiting, with a lady inside. Sir Lionel went across the pavement to her, and she invited him in, and they drove off together. I couldn't see much of her, only that she was dressed in beautiful furs.

Although I am not jealous, for I don't care enough about him, I do think it is horrid of Sir Lionel to meet so many other women when he has just married me.

I was thinking about this and then about Mr.

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Calstock, and crying a little, when a waiter came up and threw open the door, and announced:

"Miladi Rusberi."

For the moment I didn't recognise Mama under this alias; but when she came in, looking so neat and so high-bred, as she always does, and so different from anybody else, in her plain motor-bonnet and thick travelling-coat, I felt as if I should faint, I was so glad.

I could see that, though she laughed and spoke very fast and very gaily, just like her usual self, in fact, she was nervous and anxious. And when she took me to the window and had what she called "a good look at me," the tears came into her eyes and she kissed me suddenly two or three times.

"Where is Sir Lionel?" she asked in a voice that threatened mischief.

"He has gone away—in a cab—with a lady," I answered dryly.

She frowned, and stamped her foot, and grew very red, but she did not say anything.

I just laid my arms along hers and tried to look into her eyes, and I said, in a very low voice:

"Mama, how could you?"

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She didn't want to meet my eyes, and she asked sharply—

“How could I what?”

“Oh, you know what I mean. How could you marry me to that man? You knew all about it, and you must have known something about *him*. You ought to have warned me, to have told me at least *something!*”

She turned upon me in that vivacious way of hers, like a bright bird.

“No, I couldn't tell you anything,” she said quickly. “If I had it wouldn't have come off. One can never tell a girl, or she would never make a good marriage.”

I shuddered. How could she use such a word to me now?”

“A *good* marriage!” I echoed in a disgusted tone.

But Mama was quite herself again. She frowned imperiously at me.

“Yes, a good marriage,” she repeated. “There is only one sort of marriage that is good, even tolerable, and that is marriage with money. It is a horrible thing to have to acknowledge, but there is no use in blinking the fact. Marriage, life itself, is impossible nowadays, without money.”

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"But if I don't think so, surely I might have been allowed a voice in the matter."

"No, that was impossible. Men like Sir Lionel don't come in one's way every day. When one does, and proposes marriage, there is only one thing to be done—to accept him."

"Mama, Mama, when you must have known what his character was!"

She turned upon me.

"I had no idea he would leave you as he has done, or that he would insult us through our lawyer. As for the rest, I had heard, of course, about Mrs. Frewen——"

"Who is Mrs. Frewen?"

"Never mind that now. That is ancient history."

"But I think I ought to know——"

Mama interrupted me with great impatience.

"Oh, my dear child," she said, "never try to know. It is the most unwise thing you can do. There is only one recipe for the attainment of moderate comfort in marriage, and that is to learn not to see, not to hear, and not to know. The beginning is hard, of course, but in the end you will thank me for what I have done for you and what I'm teaching you now."

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I was angry as well as humiliated and shocked.

"If this is all true," I said; "if you really mean that money is the only thing that matters, and that one can only make married life endurable by seeing and knowing nothing, why didn't you bring me up in these beliefs? Why have they been sprung upon me now, when I have such a lot to unlearn?"

Mama did not know what to answer. For once I could see that she was really at a loss. Of course I knew that she was only "bluffing" all the time, and that she had never believed Sir Lionel to be capable of treating a bride in the way he was doing. But still, it jarred upon me to hear these words from her, and I wanted to make her nice and comforting and kind: I wanted her to help me, and to tell me how I was to bear my life, the dreadful life which seems to get worse instead of better.

We both stood silent for a few minutes, and then she kissed me kindly.

"You know, don't you, dear, that one can't bring up young girls except as one does? One always hopes that one may be able to give them everything to make them happy without having to do violence to one's own feelings and theirs. But then, when the time comes, and one recognises the truth that

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only money can make a marriage endurable, why, one has to make the best of it, and the girl, once married, has to make the best of it too."

"Well, Mama, I've done that as long as I could. But I can't any longer. When you go back to London, I shall go with you."

Poor Mama grew quite white.

"Oh, no; oh, no," she said in a strained sort of hoarse voice. "If I had dreamt of such a thing I would never have come."

I began to whimper.

"I was hoping," I said, "that that was why you had come, to take me away."

"No, no, no; it's not to be thought of."

"Well, then, if you don't take me, I shall go by myself. I can't bear it any longer. Sir Lionel neglects me: I don't mind that; I would rather he did that. But he insults me too. For it is insulting that he should leave me for these women, and that he should be so careless as to let me know it and see it."

Mama looked frightened. I suppose she felt surprised to find that I was not the same easily managed child as before I was married.

She put her pretty white hand, that always makes

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mine look so red and clumsy, on my shoulder, and patted me as if I had been one of her little Pekinese.

"Hush, hush, dear!" she said. "I'm sure you don't mean what you say. You have been far too well brought up not to know that you must stay with your husband, whatever happens."

"Whatever happens!"

"At least so long as your parents feel that that is the best thing for you to do. I don't mean that, if Sir Lionel were to persist in treating you as he is doing, you might not be justified in, say, paying a visit to us. But it won't come to that. Sir Lionel may not be as refined as one could wish, but I am sure he has a good heart, and when I have put things to him as I shall do——"

I interrupted Mama by laughing outright. I knew what was going to happen as well as if I had been told already what her plans were. She would see him and coax and be charming, and he, of course, would have to be nice to her. He would not be able to resist Mama any more than anybody else could! And then she would go away quite satisfied with herself, and leave him to wish her daughter were as tactful and appreciative as she!

She frowned when I interrupted her.

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"What's the matter with you?" she asked quickly.

"Nothing, Mama," said I. "But I know Sir Lionel better than you do, and I know that nothing you can say to him will make any difference to the way he treats *me*."

She sighed, and looked annoyed, not with Sir Lionel, I think, but with me for being so tiresome as not to see with her eyes.

"You are very obstinate," she said plaintively.

"No, Mama, only very unhappy, and very sure that I shall have to go on being so."

"No, no, you won't. We should not let you be ill-treated. You are too impatient. All newly married people want a little time to get used to each other's idiosyncrasies."

"It would take a century to get used to Sir Lionel's," I said quickly. "Mama, don't you see that to a man who has evidently been used to a harem, it is impossible to be content with just one wife?"

Mama gave a little smothered shriek. I never saw any one look so shocked.

She stared at me in horror.

"Is it my Cecilia, my little Cis," she said, "whom I hear using such dreadful expressions?"

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"Yes," I said. "I'm sorry if I shocked you, but it is your little Cis, and she thinks it's absurd that you should be shocked by hearing the truth, when you know it all the time. It's of no use expecting me to be a little submissive, amiable, obedient child now, when I've grown up and been married. I can't see nothing and hear nothing, as you suggest. It's a horrible, miserable life that I have to live, and if you won't help me out of it, why I see that presently I shall have to help myself."

Things were growing very serious indeed, for I was in deadly earnest, and trembling so that I couldn't stand without supporting myself against a chair. But Mama, who is nothing if not tactful, suddenly made a rush at me and kissed me on both cheeks, and told me I was quite too delightful and funny, and that I should laugh at myself in a few months, and wonder how I could have been so silly.

So I let her finish what she had to say, and then I said:

"Look here, Mama, you don't know everything, I'm quite sure, or you wouldn't talk to me as you are doing."

And then I told her that he had just gone away

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with a lady, and I told her about the things that had come to me instead of to the actress.

At that she was very indignant.

"It was unpardonable," she said, "that he should have been so careless."

"Now do you see that I can't stay with him?" I demanded.

Mama shook her head.

"I see that he must treat you better, and he will," she said quietly. "Sir Lionel wants to get on in society, and he wanted therefore to marry into one of the best families. Now he has done so we have a hold on him. I shall tell him—intimate it carefully—that unless he treats you as Lord Rushbury's daughter should be treated, you will have to demand a separation. He would not like that."

"I wish you wouldn't do that; I wish you would just take me home," I wailed. "I hate him, Mama, and I shall always hate him," I said.

"You didn't at first?"

"When I first met him? No, I didn't. He was nice to me and kind. But I didn't know then what marriage meant, and you ought to have told me. I should have known then that I could never be the wife of Sir Lionel."

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"You'll get used to it."

"Never, never, never."

"My dear, you will. You must. You are a woman, and you must fulfil your destiny. It is of no use to try to escape it."

"Oh, Mama, you married the man you loved."

"Yes, but it comes to the same thing in the end. Papa lives for the most part in Newmarket, and I in town. It's separation, none the less for being amicable."

"Oh, Mama!"

"Hush, child; don't be silly. You have to know these things now. Very few marriages are happy. In most there's a rift makes itself evident sooner or later. Then, if the people are well bred, they agree each to go his own way. If they are foolish there's a horrid quarrel, and then another and another, until it comes to a scandal, and everything has to be known by everybody."

I was cold with horror. To hear that Papa and Mama, the two people I loved most in the world, were not the happy couple I had always imagined them to be, was so shocking that it seemed to complete the transformation of the world from the happy place I had thought it to a very Gehenna.

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I sat down quickly, saying nothing, but feeling as if the ground were giving way under my feet. Where was I to look for comfort, for support, when those I had thought to lean on failed me like this.

For a little while we were quite silent, Mama walking to the nearest window restlessly and looking out, and I leaning on my hand without even looking at her.

Presently she came back to me and put her hand on my shoulder.

"You mustn't think me unkind, Cis," she said, in quite a gentle voice, not like her sweet "society" cooing voice, but *really* nice and kind. "But believe me, child, I know everything, and I understand everything, and I'm dreadfully, dreadfully sorry that it should all have come to your knowledge so suddenly. It's no worse in the long run to find out what men are at once——"

I looked up.

"Some men, not all men," I said quickly. "They are not all like Sir Lionel, I'm quite sure."

I spoke so firmly that Mama looked at me closely.

"What men are there who are different?" she asked.

I had two names in my mind, but I did not feel

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trustful enough now to mention them. I am quite sure Jack would never behave like Sir Lionel to any woman, and I am equally sure that my Mr. Calstock wouldn't.

"There must be many," I said.

Mama looked at me more closely.

"I suppose you have some one in your mind, some one who is different?" she said sharply.

I shook my head.

"I feel quite sure," I said, "that Sir Lionel is not the rule, but the exception."

"He is not at all an exception among rich men, Cis," she said quietly. "You don't know the world, child, and you don't understand how money spoils people. A man who has a large income gets spoiled. Everybody runs after him, and he is put upon a pedestal. He can't understand his proper place in the world apart from his money. He becomes money and nothing else, because you see that is all that other people see in him."

"But *I* never saw that," I protested. "I didn't want money."

"Of course not. Because we had taken care you should never want it. A child wants so little; but a woman wants a great deal. We arranged for you

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that the money should come just before you would want it. Listen, Cis; when a year has passed, if all goes well—that means if Sir Lionel keeps his money, you will be happy and contented. He will have settled down to consider you, as he ought to do, and you will have got used to him. On the other hand, you will have found your own pursuits, which you will have money enough to enjoy, and Sir Lionel will leave you to yourself as much as you like. Oh, my dear, you must trust me to know how these things arrange themselves. It is only at the beginning that there is any friction, and there is often a good deal even in happy marriages.”

I caught at the last words.

“Happy marriages! Ah, then you own that marriages may be happy!” I said.

She looked cross with herself for having made this slip. She answered rather tartly:

“I ought to have said ‘So-called happy marriages,’” she said. “Look at your sister’s.”

“Marjorie’s?”

“Yes. Look at the terrible hash she has made of things by indulging in caprice and forgetting her duty, and worrying herself with foolish hopes of

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being 'happy.' As if anybody could be happy in this world without money!"

My throat felt dry.

"What did she do?" I asked.

Mama looked at me searchingly, and I knew that she was going to point a dreadful moral, instead of telling the exact truth, whatever that might be.

"What did she do? Well, we married her to a charming man, one whose tastes were the same as Papa's, and as her own. He was fond of horses and all kinds of sport. And he was rich."

"But he was old, wasn't he?"

"He was older than she was, of course. She was a girl like you. We couldn't have married her to a boy."

"Well, what did she do?"

"Instead of being satisfied to have everything in the world she wanted, she fell in love with another man, and then, instead of fighting against these wrong ideas and thoughts, she gave way to them, so that in the end her husband divorced her. There was a terrible scandal, of course, and she has ruined her life."

"But Sir Giles Luffenham married her?"

"Yes. But he is poor, and they are always

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pressed for money, so they can't do anything; and they are always quarrelling. I'm told they lead the most wretched life."

"Why do you say 'I am told'? Don't you ever see her?"

Mama frowned.

"No. She hardly ever comes to London—they can't afford it. They have to live quietly up in the North of England, tied to each other, and making each other miserable."

I wondered whether this was the same version of the story that I should hear from Marjorie herself, and I suddenly asked Mama for her address.

"I don't know it," she said sharply. "She has estranged herself from everybody by her wickedness, and now she is being punished for it."

"But how was it so wicked to run away from a man whom she had never wanted to marry?" I asked, bolder now than I used to be.

Mama looked at me out of the corners of her eyes.

"It is wicked to run away from your husband, whether you wanted to marry him or not," she said severely. "I'm surprised at your speaking as if it were possible to deny that."

"Well, I do deny it. I think if a girl chooses a

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man to be her husband she ought to feel bound to put up with him. But when she has a husband chosen for her, and he turns out to be a man whom no girl could possibly like or even respect, then I can't see that it is wicked to run away from him."

"What! With somebody else?" asked Mama in horror.

I didn't answer at once. Such a contingency had not suggested itself to me. However, now I faced it, and thought it over, and answered.

"It seems to me," I said deliberately at last, "that it is not so wicked for a woman to run away from a husband she couldn't possibly care for with a man she could care for, as for parents to marry a girl, who doesn't know what marriage is, to a man whom they know quite well to be incapable of making her happy."

Mama, instead of taking this seriously, grew impatient.

"All this talk about men is disgusting," she said. "It is not a question of a man in marriage; I must repeat that firmly. It is wholly a question of money."

I jumped up.

"And supposing," I said, "that it were to turn out

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that Sir Lionel is not so rich as you thought. What then?"

She turned quite white.

"It would be too dreadful," she said hoarsely. And I could see that the way in which he had neglected me and insulted me was nothing in her eyes compared to the fear I had now put into her heart. "But surely, surely you have heard nothing to make you think that is true?"

She seized me by the arm and looked earnestly into my face.

I shrugged my shoulders: I thought she deserved a little fright.

"Well," I said, "it seems strange that he should think two thousand a year such a lot to settle upon me, if he is so very rich that money is of no importance to him, doesn't it?"

Her fingers relaxed their grip, and her face grew quite drawn and old. I felt sorry for my ill nature.

"Oh, it's all right, Mama, at least I have no other reason for suggesting that it's not," I said quickly.

But I could see that she also had had moments of uneasiness for the very reason I suggested.

We couldn't talk any more, because at that moment Sir Lionel came in.

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It would have been an awkward meeting, I could see, but for Mama's presence of mind. He had evidently not heard she was there, and he scowled at her most fearfully when he first caught sight of her. But she was so winning and so sweet, and she talked and smiled so hard, and clung to his hand with such a pretty appearance of confidence and affection, that I very soon found it was only I who was "out of it," and really I became quite uncomfortable, as they sat talking confidentially together in the corner of the room, and felt as if I were rather an intruder.

Presently, as they did not appear to take any notice of me after the first minute, in which Mama pretended to think that I did not look well, and Sir Lionel pretended to think that it was the weather, I slipped out of the room and left them to their *tête-à-tête*.

I was angry and surprised. Surely, knowing that he had been neglecting me, she ought to have taken him to task and rebuked him!

But perhaps, I thought, she was waiting until I had gone away to speak out what was in her mind about the treatment of her daughter.

However, when after quite a long time, during

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which I had heard them both laughing more than once, Sir Lionel came in and asked if I would like to go for a drive, I saw that he was better-tempered than usual, and I was sure that Mama had been too "tactful" to say anything disagreeable.

I was angry and hurt.

But I had no opportunity of remonstrating with her then, for I had only three minutes to get ready in. There was just this crumb of comfort for me, that Hanway, who came to dress me for the drive, was more civil than usual, and this I guessed to be a consequence of Mama's visit.

But all day long the same thing went on: Mama was perfectly sweet and civil to Sir Lionel, and almost ignored me, except to scold me for not looking more cheerful, and to tell me that she was sorry I had not taken advantage of my visit to Paris to buy some smarter hats.

Sir Lionel caught at this remark eagerly.

"That's just what I tell her, Lady Rushbury," he said. "She wants style. If she were to wear some of the things I buy for her she would look twice as handsome as she does. A woman may be ever so beautiful, but there's no doubt she wants the aid of dress to show her off to the best advantage."

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I was just going to say, rather sullenly, I'm afraid, that I had no wish to "show myself off," when Mama dashed in, laughed appreciatively, and agreed heartily with him.

"But you must remember, Sir Lionel," she went on, looking at him persuasively with those long eyes of hers, "Cecilia is very, very young, and it is generally older women who understand how to make the most of themselves."

And so it went on all day long. Mama never once complained of anything Sir Lionel did or said, but flattered him and his taste and his judgment all the time, and gently reproached me for ever so many little things, always taking his part against me, not angrily or unkindly, but with a suave little smile and a little bend of the head to look into my face, until I was irritated almost beyond endurance, so that I grew silent and sulky, and had the greatest difficulty in the world not to let the tears fall.

The day seemed very long, although through Mama being there I was saved the trouble of talking or trying to be amiable and to exert myself to talk. Mama can always be trusted to do the talking.

She pretended to Sir Lionel that she had only come over to Paris to see her dressmaker, but she

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let him take her to the theatre with me in the evening, and she went shopping with him and me to-day. And she managed to keep Sir Lionel in great good humour all day long, and I think he paid the bill for her when she chose herself some hats and cloaks and things.

I was feeling very sore indeed by the time she bade me good-bye this evening. But she got a few minutes with me, in which she told me that she had done her best for me, and that she thought matters would work more smoothly for the future.

"It seems to me, Mama," I said, "that you have done nothing but scold me and flatter Sir Lionel all the time."

Mama gave me a sphinx-like smile.

"Yes, my dear Cis," she said, "I flattered him and I scolded you, because that was the only way to manage him. Now write to me at the end of a week, and you will give me better news."

That was all she would say, and I had not got over my soreness of heart when she kissed me at the station.

But I suppose she did say the right thing and do the right thing, as usual, for as we came back to the hotel Sir Lionel told me that we were going

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on to Nice by the Côte d'Azur train to-morrow morning.

I am so glad, if I can be glad of anything.

But oh! I do feel bitter, and I can't help it, to think that Mama should have taken it all so calmly, and that she should have left me feeling as if I hadn't a friend in the world!

NICE, *March 22nd.*

It is uncanny to be as clever as Mama is! When she went away from Paris two days ago I was sore and angry, thinking that she had done nothing but get herself some nice hats and things and some money from Sir Lionel.

But ever since I have been finding out, first by one little thing and then by another, that she must have been working quite hard all the time in her own way to make things more comfortable for me. And all without saying anything to let me know what she was doing.

At least, she didn't say much, only that the best way to get what you wanted was to use flattery.

She must have flattered Sir Lionel very much. I wonder what on earth she found to flatter him about! I'm sure I couldn't think of anything to say to flatter him, if I were to try all day long.

In the first place, I have got rid of that horrid Hanway, and I think that must have been her doing.

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At least, the night before last, when Mama had gone and after I had written my diary, Sir Lionel called her, and I heard them talking loudly in the next room. When I went to bed, Hanway was there, looking very angry, and she told me curtly that she was leaving the next morning.

I could see that she expected me to ask questions, but I did not. I said, "Very well," so that all she could do was to pull my hair as she did it for the night, and glare disagreeably over my head at my reflection in the glass.

Sir Lionel has been very quiet since Mama went away, not talking much about her, except to say that she was a very charming woman who knew her way about, but evidently thinking things over.

When Hanway had nearly done my hair Sir Lionel came in, and in an instant Hanway grew very red and tossed her head and looked daggers at him.

"You can go, Hanway," he said shortly, without looking at her.

"Yes, I know I can," she said pertly.

But she went, and I turned round in my chair at the dressing-table wondering what was going to happen.

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Sir Lionel drew a chair up, sat down on it, and began to tap the table with one of my hairpins.

"As you don't like that woman, I have given her notice to go," he said, without looking at me.

"Thank you very much," I said. "I'm very glad. I don't like her at all. She is very rude to me, and besides, she does nothing at all for me."

"All right. Lady Rushbury is going to engage another maid, and to send her out at once. Will you keep Hanway till the other one comes?"

"I'd much rather not," I said. "But I will do just as you please."

"Very well. You had better take her to Nice, then, as you would find it inconvenient to travel without a maid——"

"Oh, no, it wouldn't make any difference to me——" I began.

He looked up.

"Lady Cecilia Eberhard cannot travel without at least one maid," he said.

I was frightened by that expression "at least." What should I do if I had more than one of these horrid maids to look after. But I said nothing. So he went on:

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"I am sorry to find, Cecilia, that you have so little taste for married life."

He waited, but I only kept very still, not knowing what was to come next. He looked quickly at me, and said:

"You know what I mean." I just bent my head a little more, without speaking. "You should have confided in me. It is a pity when one has to learn these things from other people."

I felt myself growing scarlet, but I only bent my head still lower and kept silent.

"Nothing was farther from my thoughts than to obtrude. I had thought I was more likely to be accused of neglect, since I have had to leave you so much."

There was a tone of secret resentment in Sir Lionel's voice that prevented his words from sounding kind. I could see that Mama, in her clever way, must have put it to him that there was danger of my breaking away altogether, and that he was thoroughly frightened and anxious for peace at any price.

"I'm sure you didn't mean to neglect me," I said, trying to take a leaf out of Mama's book and to speak amiably, though I could hear

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that my voice was only frightened, not sweet like hers.

"As I say, it was a pity the intimation that you were not contented did not come from you," he went on rather tartly. "It is unpleasant to have to put up with outside interference. But anyhow, it comes to this: Lady Cecilia Eberhard can do as she pleases. You have done me a great honour, Lady Cecilia, in becoming my wife——" And here he looked at me with mockery which was quite ferocious, "and of course I am the humblest of your servants. You will henceforth have your own apartments wherever we go, and you shall have nothing more to complain of, I assure you."

"I have not complained," I said in a strangled voice.

He had risen heavily from his chair, and he only shrugged his shoulders.

"Good night," he said.

He made me a mocking bow and went out of the room.

I scarcely knew whether I was very much relieved, or half relieved and half alarmed. Although Mama had done so much that was good for me, she had also, as I could see from the sneering tone in

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which he always spoke of her "cleverness" and her "charm," done some harm too.

But at any rate now I had gained something: we were going to leave Paris, where the ladies were so attractive to him, and I was going to be rid of Hanway.

And I had got the greatest boon possible, next to freedom—I was no longer a slave.

I didn't see Sir Lionel again until yesterday morning. I then noticed that what Mama had accomplished was not all satisfactory. He was disagreeable in a curious way, outwardly very civil to me, but never losing an opportunity to utter some sneer about my family and their cleverness, their ability in getting what they wanted, and in getting it without having to pay for it.

I began to see very soon what he meant, but really, as I had no share in the bad bargain he covertly complains of, I don't think I need feel very self-reproachful.

There was no time for him to make me very uncomfortable, as we had to start so early for the train.

I rather enjoyed the journey, for I was by myself nearly all the time, and I amused myself by

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looking out of the window until it was too dark to see anything.

It was quite late last night when we got here and came to this hotel. I slept heavily, and when I woke up this morning it was ten o'clock.

No Hanway made her appearance, so I dressed myself and managed to bundle up my hair somehow, and it was not till then that I found out that my trunks, which were in the dressing-room, had not been unpacked.

Last night I reached here so late, and was so tired, that I was like a doll in her hands, and I went to bed and fell asleep while she was in the dressing-room unlocking the trunks, which had been got through the custom-house very quickly, I think because Sir Lionel was generous in his tips.

This morning I found that the trunks were all in disorder, and that, though some of the things had been taken out, they had not been put in the chests or in the wardrobe.

I could not understand it. I missed a handsome cloak of pale blue cloth, embroidered in gold and silver and lined with ermine, which was one of Sir Lionel's wedding presents.

And a hat that he had bought me in Paris, black

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crinoline straw with a mass of shaded green ostrich feathers, was missing too. Then a suspicion came into my mind, and I looked in my dressing-case, where I kept all the jewels I brought with me. Mama made me leave some behind with her, telling me she would send them to me if I wanted them, and saying that there were so many thieves on the Riviera that it was a pity to take everything.

A bracelet with a big emerald surrounded by diamonds had disappeared, and a diamond ornament for the hair.

Then I began to understand, and I locked everything up very carefully, and went to the sitting-room to breakfast.

The first thing that struck me when I got into the room was the lovely view from the windows. I had often heard of the deep blue of the sea at Nice, but I had never conceived anything so beautiful or so strange. For the first few minutes I stayed looking out of the window in delight.

Then Sir Lionel came in, and I remembered everything, and when he had wished me good morning, in the same mock respectful manner, shaking hands with me ceremoniously before he kissed me, I asked whether Hanway had gone away.

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He looked at me in an odd way, and said yes, he supposed so. At least he had paid her wages.

"I thought she was gone," I said rather dryly. "And my opera cloak—the one you gave me, and the Paris hat, and my emerald bracelet, have all gone too."

Sir Lionel was furious. At first he said it was impossible, but when I took him to see my trunks, and explained how everything had been packed, he changed colour, and swore that the custom-house people were thieves, and that he would have the things back.

I said nothing to this, because I felt so sure that the custom-house people, however dishonest they might be, could not have had time or opportunity to rifle my trunks and my dressing-case in the short time that the things were in their hands, and with Sir Lionel himself looking on.

But I made no more comments, and when, presently, I examined my trunks again and found that a dress of pale pink silk had disappeared as well as the other things, I said nothing about it.

We went out during the morning, and I was so delighted with the beauty of the place that I felt

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quite happy for a little while, and then the usual thing happened, to spoil it all.

A lady in a beautiful white dress, with a great black hat smothered in a forest of huge lilies and grasses, caught Sir Lionel's eye and smiled and bowed to him. She was exceedingly pretty, but I did not like her face at all. There was something wicked in it, something that made me think of all the pictures I had ever seen of enchantresses and temptresses.

He hurried me on after that, and took me back to the hotel before I had seen much more.

I was disgusted, but it was of no use to say anything, and I remained indoors for the rest of the morning and all the afternoon, as Sir Lionel went out again at once.

He came back in time for dinner, and then he took me by train to Monte Carlo to see the gambling at the casino.

I had scarcely got inside the rooms when I caught sight of a pale blue cloak that I recognised. I was so much astounded that for a moment I said nothing, I did not even exclaim. But I watched the wearer of the cloak until we came up with her, and then I managed to get a sight of her face.

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And, as I had expected, it was Hanway.

"Look," I said to Sir Lionel, "it's Hanway, and she is wearing my blue cloak. It is she who stole my things."

To my horror, he glanced at her and then drew me quickly away.

"It's not your cloak," he said, "and it's not Hanway, of course. It's a woman very like her, and the cloak is very like yours."

I was amazed.

"Oh, surely you must know the cloak. There isn't another like it anywhere," I said.

But he grew angry, said it was absurd, and that there were dozens of cloaks like that. But I could see that he was very much annoyed, and he very soon took me away, without even letting me try my luck at the roulette tables.

We came back to Nice very early, and Sir Lionel was so terribly ill-tempered that I did not speak to him all the way.

It has been a most uncomfortable discovery. I do hope that I shan't have to meet this woman every day either at Nice or at Monte Carlo, wearing my clothes!

NICE, *March 23rd.*

OH, such a happy, happy day! Everything is changed, and grown bright and beautiful! And Sir Lionel may leave me alone now as much as he likes!

I don't know whether Sir Lionel met Hanway or wrote to her or sent her some message. But when to-day he suggested going to Monte Carlo for me to try my luck at the tables, and I objected, saying I didn't want to go there any more, he said quickly:

"You won't see that woman you fancied was wearing your cloak, if that's what you're afraid of."

So I withdrew my objection, and we went over late in the afternoon.

Sir Lionel said if we went early we should get seats, but that if we left it late we should have to stand. At first I only watched, while Sir Lionel, who was sitting beside me, played for both of us, by just telling me what to put the money on. He had to put the money out, as I had none. And I grew quite greedy at the sight of the little piles of

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silver and gold, and it made my heart bleed to see them swept up.

I have never cared for money before, but I have had its praises so dinned into my ears lately, and I have felt myself to be so helpless for want of it, that I have got now a very strong desire to have some of my own.

When he had played for me for some time, I began to understand the game a little, and presently I asked Sir Lionel if I might try to play by myself. So he gave me ten pieces, and I began. And I grew more and more interested, and first I won, and then I lost, and then I won again, and when we got up to come away I had won three pounds.

And besides this I had the money Sir Lionel had given me.

He had been losing, but not very much, and he seemed to be quite good-humoured over it, and then he asked if he should put my money in his purse to take care of it, as I was carrying it in my hand.

But I said No, and wouldn't give it up. And I could see he was not pleased. I suppose he likes to think that I am wholly dependent upon him for everything, but I don't like the feeling, and if only

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I can win a little money of my own, I should be so very, very glad.

And then, as we came away from the tables, I suddenly felt as if my heart was leaping up, so that I could almost have screamed with delight.

For there, not two yards away, sauntering in with his hands in his pockets, looking the picture of good looks and good breeding as he always does, and oh, in such very strong contrast to somebody else, was Jack!

For a moment I couldn't speak. But I stopped short, and Sir Lionel asked what was the matter. He spoke very sullenly, being displeased with me because I wouldn't give up my winnings.

"I think," I said, "that is my cousin, Jack Eardington. Do you know him?"

He was better tempered directly. Although he complains pretty frankly about having to "pay for it," he is always very anxious to make acquaintances among people who are in society, and he asked about him, and when I told him he was my mother's brother's son, and that his father was Admiral Eardington, he said he supposed I should like to speak to him.

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Jack had not seen us, but I ran up to him and called softly:

"Jack!"

It was lovely to see his face when he turned round. I think I have never felt so happy as I did at that moment, not even when I met Mr. Calstock or Mama. He shook hands with me and with Sir Lionel, to whom I introduced him; and when he said he was staying with his sister and her husband, Lord and Lady Meltham, at Cannes, I knew that I was going to have a lovely time.

I don't care for Maggie, his sister, and I have only once seen her husband, Lord Meltham; but I suddenly felt as if I loved them all, for I was so glad to think that I should have friends of my own and of my own people to talk to again.

I was afraid Sir Lionel would notice how delighted I was, and be angry with me about it, as a slight to him. But I think he was only pleased to think that he should now make the acquaintance of another batch of what he calls "swells."

He shook hands heartily with Jack, who said he must find Meltham, who was "somewhere about," and introduce him. And Jack ran off to look for his brother-in-law, while Sir Lionel turned to me

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quite sweetly, and said how pleased I must be to meet my relations so unexpectedly.

And I felt at once that my destiny had taken a turn for the better.

Jack was not long in coming back with Lord Meltham, who is a silly, harum-scarum fellow, always in debt and always in the best of tempers over it. He is so tall, and so thin, and has such sloping shoulders and such a long, fair, silly face that you can recognise him a quarter of a mile away.

He and Sir Lionel chummed up directly, and I knew that Jack had been telling him all about my husband, and especially dwelling upon the fact that he was a "millionaire," and the two walked away together, leaving me with Jack.

The other two were going back to the tables, so we made an appointment to meet in the grounds outside, and we went out into the moonlight. It was very cold, but fine, and to find myself once more with my old cousin Jack was so lovely that I felt I didn't want to talk at all; it was enough to be alive! And to sit by him in the moonlight, and to look once more at a profile that did not include a decidedly Jewish nose, thick lips, and a middle-aged double chin.

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However, I had to talk, and, alas! I had to say things that were not true.

I was not going to own to being unhappy, and I was not going to let Jack know that I was neglected.

It was curious how quickly I made up my mind to that! If I had been asked, half an hour before meeting him, what I should say to Jack if I did meet him, I think I should have answered that I should get his sympathy by telling him a little of my situation, and so obtaining his pity.

But when I found myself sitting by his side, and met his eyes looking, oh, so tenderly and kindly, into mine, somehow I knew on the instant that I must be careful, and that I must not say too much.

So when he began by asking me whether I was happy, I replied that I was.

This was true indeed in a way, for I had been feeling very happy for quite ten minutes; but he took my answer to mean more than it did, and he looked surprised, and I think, rather disappointed.

"I'm so glad, my dear Cis," he said. "Somehow I was afraid that you and Eberhard might not hit

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it off together. But I suppose he has turned over a new leaf and means to settle down."

These words made my heart beat faster. I felt a sort of spasm of helpless rage. Everybody had known what sort of man he was, yet not one word had anybody said to prevent me from walking into the pit.

That was my feeling as I heard Jack say this; but, determined as I was to put the best possible face on it all, especially now that my position had become more bearable, I laughed, and said I supposed he had.

"Of course it's awfully rippin' to have everything you can wish for, and never to be bothered for money. By Jove! I can't conceive such an ideal state!"

It was on the tip of my tongue to say that it was not at all like the state I was in. But I remembered my caution, and I only said:

"Poor Jack! I see I'm expected to be sympathetic, but you seem to have a pleasant enough time of it; anyhow, you've come here, which is not exactly a cheap place, and I suppose you're enjoying yourself."

"Oh, as to that, I don't say I'm not. And now

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we've met you, I shall be jolly enough. But to have no money, and no means of getting any, is beastly rotten, Cis, I tell you."

"You may break the bank," I suggested, smiling. He shook his head.

"The bank's more likely to break me," he said sagely. "And, anyhow, I don't think I have the gambler's instinct—not certainly that of the successful gambler."

"Haven't you? Well, I think I have. At any rate, I've begun by being successful to-night," I said.

"Oh, well, it doesn't matter with you. If you win, it amuses you; if you lose, it doesn't hurt you. I believe that, strictly speaking, that's not gambling at all."

I wouldn't tell him how pleasant winning was to me, because I had no money allowance of my own.

"It's interesting though," I said. "And I suppose the rich people are just as anxious to win as the poor ones."

"Greedy brutes, yes! But of course that's only human nature, to want to be on top all the time! You say you were lucky to-night, Cis?"

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"Yes, I won three pounds."

"Well then, look here, we'll come to-morrow, and you shall play for me."

"Oh, no, no, I should be afraid to! Supposing I lost, it would make me so miserable!"

Jack laughed. He was leaning forward to look into my face, very gentle, very sympathetic, very tender.

"Then I'll tell you what you shall do: you shall stand behind my chair."

"Yes, I don't mind if I do that."

"And you'll bring me luck, I know."

"Oh, Jack, I only wish I could! I only wish I could have done it before——"

I had hurried on, I had betrayed myself. I could feel it at once in the startled look in his eyes, the movement he made towards me. We sat for a few moments silent. It is only people who care for each other, or who are very intimate, who can be silent like that, leaving the pauses to take care of themselves, not troubling themselves to make small talk.

Then there were footsteps, very quiet, stealthy footsteps behind the seat on which we sat, and I looked round quickly, and so did Jack. And look-

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ing at us intently, with oh, such a spiteful look on her face, was Hanway.

She was wearing my pink silk dress, one that was part of my trousseau.

I uttered an exclamation of disgust, and Jack, who, we always say, sees more of a woman's dress than the woman herself does, muttered under his breath:

"By Jove!"

I knew he had found out something, and I sat quite still. Hanway had marched off, swinging her skirts from side to side, and I sat with my hands in front of me, trying to think of something to say to divert his attention. But Jack stared at Hanway as she walked, and then he looked at me, and saw that I was not so composed as I wanted to appear.

"By Jove, Cis, what does this mean?" he said. "I've heard of the Monte Carlo thieves, but this beats everything! That woman is wearing one of the dresses from your trousseau."

I tried to laugh, as if at an absurdity. But I dare say there was something in my look or manner that betrayed me. At any rate, Jack suddenly changed the subject of his own accord, and began to talk very quickly about something else.

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I didn't pay much attention, because I was wondering in my own mind what I had better do, and I decided that I ought to tell him something. For if I did not, he would go back to his sister and her husband, and tell them what he had seen, and there would be gossip.

"Look here, Jack," I said, "I'm going to tell you something that you must not repeat, because, as you can see, I don't want it talked about. That woman was my maid, and Mama saw she was useless, and got Sir Lionel to send her away. And she has revenged herself by taking some of my best things. I don't care two straws about the things themselves, but you may imagine I don't care to see them worn like that."

"By Jove, no."

"And I don't want it talked about."

"Why don't you tell your husband, and he would accuse the woman and get them back? That dress came from a first-rate firm in Paris, and cost three thousand francs."

"I dare say. But I don't want it."

"You ought to get it back, though."

"No, no, I don't want a scandal."

"There need be no scandal. You can claim your

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property, and get her to restore it all under threat of prosecution. You tell Eberhard. *He* will know what to do. It's disgraceful that a woman of that sort should be walking about the place in clothes which could actually be recognised as yours."

For the first time a most hideous thought came into my mind about Hanway, and the reason why she was so bold. It took my breath away, and made me feel cold and sick.

"Oh!" I said, under my breath.

Jack went on:

"Trust me, there will be no row about it. The things will be given up as soon as you tell Eberhard what you have seen. Let me tell him *I* recognised the dress. It will make the case stronger that it was I who knew it."

"No, no, I don't want to hear any more about it," I said quickly.

"Nonsense! Don't be so shy. I assure you there will be no need for you to appear, or anything of that sort. They will be given back."

I could not let him go on. He would have to know. I got up from the seat.

"No, they *won't* be given back," I said desperately.

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Jack sprang up, looking quite white.

"You don't mean to say——"

"The woman would brazen it out that the things were given to her."

"*Were* they? Oh, it's not possible!"

"No, no. She stole the dress, but I would rather not say anything more about it. I did tell Sir Lionel."

For a few moments we both stood breathing hard, saying nothing. Then Jack said ever so gently:

"Come into the reading-room and sit down where we can talk. It's getting cold out here."

So we went into the casino, and I knew that he could feel my hand trembling when he gave me his arm. For I was staggering a little, feeling dull and heavy and stupid, not knowing what to say, or how to explain away the bad impression I had given without meaning to do so.

I was dreading the time when we should be in the quiet corner he was looking for. I knew that he would ask me questions, and that, even if I didn't answer them, he was now quite aware that I was not the happy bride I had tried to make myself out.

I tried to think of subjects of conversation, and when we were seated in a quiet corner, I did begin

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some feeble talk about the London theatres and what he had been doing with himself. But he answered hastily and comprehensively that there was nothing worth seeing in town, and that he had been doing nothing, as usual, and then he said:

"So you're not happy, Cis?"

"Yes, I am."

"That blackguard Eberhard hasn't the decency to treat you properly?"

"I don't want you to say that."

"Well, it's the truth. I suppose that was why Aunt Vi went to Paris."

I turned upon him, rather fiercely.

"I suppose you might have known how he would treat me, since you call him what you do."

Jack was taken aback.

"I never thought he would behave badly to you. Who could have thought so? And on your wedding trip?"

"But you must have known all about him?"

"I knew something about him, of course. Everybody did. If your parents thought it didn't matter, how could I interfere?"

"You might have warned me! Instead of that, you actually congratulated me! How could you?"

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It's all very well for Papa and Mama to think that money is the only thing, but surely everybody can't think so! At least I ought to have had my choice! I ought to have been told that he was rich, but that—Oh, well, I don't want to talk of these things now. It's all over and settled and done with, isn't it? And there's nothing to do but to make the best of it."

Jack was flushed, excited, angry, undecided how much to say.

"Your father will have to see him and speak to him," he said at last.

I laughed.

"Papa! Why, it was he who first told me what a splendid marriage I was to make!"

"Well, somebody must speak to him."

But I had by this time had plenty of time to think things over, and I came to the conclusion that we were both straining at a gnat after all.

"Look here, Jack," I said, "I want you to forget all about this, and not to speak about it to any one. It is not Sir Lionel's fault that this woman has stolen my things, and I know he was frightfully annoyed when he found it out. But he thinks it better to ignore the thing, and I agree with him. I

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don't say I've been perfectly happy up to now. But this I think I can say: I've been quite as happy as you, and all the other people who knew all about my husband's way of life, had any reason to expect that I should be."

"Don't say that, Cis. I really thought——"

"Oh, yes, I know you all thought a miracle was going to take place, and that Sir Lionel was going to be an ideal husband. Well, you were all wrong. But for all that I am not unhappy, and now that you and your sister have come out here I don't suppose I shall have much to complain of. Indeed, I haven't now. You must believe me. Sir Lionel has listened to reason in the shape of Mama, and has done his best to meet us, and to make amends for anything that has not gone quite right."

I stammered, and blushed, and hesitated, and began to cry and checked myself, and got through this speech somehow as quickly as I could. I wanted to prevent his holding a sort of family council with Maggie and her husband. Maggie is a most fearful gossip, and she would just love to have my affairs to chatter about, I know.

Jack nodded when I had finished.

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"All right, all right," he said.

And then we caught the sound of the voices of Sir Lionel and Lord Meltham, and we got up and went to meet them. They had arranged an appointment for to-morrow, that we are to go over to Cannes to luncheon.

I only had another moment with Jack, with just time to tell him not to say anything to Maggie, except that I was getting on all right.

Sir Lionel was ever so much nicer to me coming back to-night. I can see he is pleased to have met Lord Meltham, and from what he said to me I know that he hopes I shall not tell any of them that I am not happy.

Indeed I am happy now, for I can see Jack whenever I like, and even Maggie and Lord Meltham are all right, and I don't feel so stranded as I did before.

As for the Hanway incident, I see now, of course, that it was much more unpleasant than I had thought. Otherwise she would not have dared to show herself in the casino at Monte Carlo in my things. But after all, though it is very horrible and awful and insulting, it is not as if I had cared for him. Then it would have been unbearable. And

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it is not as if I could ever suffer such indignities again.

Thank God Mama has prevented that.

I suppose I shall have to put up with more sneers from Sir Lionel about my family and perhaps about myself. But I can't feel that I have been to blame from beginning to end. I tried hard to save myself and him from this horrid mockery of a marriage. But he persisted in wanting it, and so did Papa and Mama.

And when it was done, when I had found out, I did my best to please Sir Lionel. I dare say it was a poor attempt, for I think I must have shown that it was all against the grain. But I did try. I remembered all Mama had told me about the demands of high breeding, and I think I became a very fair imitation of a fine wax doll. Could he have expected more? In fairness, I don't think he could.

And now that the terrible time is over, and that I am able to breathe a little more freely, what do I think of it all?

I don't quite know yet, and I won't try to puzzle it out. The world is a very different place from what I thought it a month ago, but now

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that Jack has turned up, there are compensations.

Happy? Yes, I am happy to-night, happier than I had thought it possible that I should ever be again.

NICE, *March 24th.*

SIR LIONEL took me to Cannes to-day. He is quite different now, much nicer to me, and I see that he is awfully pleased to be taken up by the Melthams. They are pleased too, because he likes to show off his generosity, and they are not well off. So they are all contented.

Maggie and her husband have got the loan of somebody's villa; it is a very pretty one, and we had a lovely day there.

Maggie has wormed out of Jack what she wanted to know about Sir Lionel and me. I am thankful to say that he has not told her about Hanway, but she knows that I have not been happy, and that Mama had to come over to put things right. I took care not to tell her more than I could help, and so she doesn't know very much.

Then she took care to let me know all she could, and she poured into my ears such a tale of Sir Lionel's enormities that I felt bound to stand up

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for him, and to defend him to the best of my power.

As I have nothing to complain of just now, it is the least I can do to look on his best side.

Unfortunately, this made her determined to what she called "open my eyes."

And so she told me the story about Mrs. Frewen.

I protested that I didn't want to hear any more.

"Why do you tell me these things," I said, "now that I'm married to him? Surely, what he did before he married me doesn't concern me, and I had better not know it!"

"My dear Cis," said Maggie, "you had better know all there is to be known at once, and get it over. Otherwise you will come across some unpleasant surprises."

"If you wanted me to know all these things, you should have told me before I married him."

"So I would have done, if I'd had the chance. I don't approve of letting a girl marry a man without knowing anything about him. Of course, some people say that is the only way to get a girl to marry a man she doesn't care for, but I don't believe that. You were old enough to have had your choice."

I was silent. I knew she expected me to say that

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I would have chosen to remain unmarried, but I thought it better to say nothing. Having been told that Sir Lionel had for years been a diligent frequenter of the lighter sort of theatres, and well known as a person to be appealed to successfully to keep them going, that his name had been associated with various women whom everybody talks about but nobody knows, she now informed me that, after all, there was really only one woman in the world of whom there was any need for me to feel jealous.

I protested that I did not want to know the name, but Maggie said I ought to know it, as she had been informed that the person in question had been seen on the Riviera this season.

"She's a Mrs. Frewen," went on Maggie. "I believe she is a very pretty woman, as of course one would expect. She is slight, and not very tall, with the most wonderful long eyes that look green sometimes, and sometimes brown, and sometimes grey."

I said nothing, but I did not try to prevent her going on with her story, for it suddenly occurred to me that this description would apply to the lady with the white dress and the lilies in her hat, whom I had seen Sir Lionel meet on the Promenade at Nice.

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"She is quite a nobody, socially," went on Maggie. "Her husband is a clerk in a bank, or something of that sort, and of no particular family. But she is really a very fascinating person, and she got such a hold on Sir Lionel that she hoped to get him to marry her."

"But how could he, if she had a husband already?" I asked.

"Oh, my dear Cis, among people of that sort these things are managed easily enough! You may as well know now, for it is as well to be prepared."

"I don't think I want to hear any more. It's all—horrible," I said.

I could not help shrinking from hearing any more about these horrid ways.

But Maggie persisted:

"It's important for you to know this, as you are almost certain to have trouble, sooner or later, with this woman," she said coolly.

My heart sank.

"Well, don't force me to meet it half-way," I urged.

"No, dear. But you may as well hear me out. Sir Lionel fought to get free from her, because he wanted to make a marriage that would take him

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into society. And he succeeded. He married you. But it is not to be supposed that she will rest content to be thrust aside and forgotten. There! That is really all. You know what the danger is, and you are forearmed."

Was I? I doubted it. I doubted whether I even knew exactly what the danger was, after all Maggie's pains to make it clear to me that I had married a very wicked man.

I made up my mind, indeed, not to believe too much of what she told me, even though I might have reason to fear that it could not all be thrust aside as of no consequence.

What could happen to me through Mrs. Frewen's influence? Would he be more likely to want to marry her now than he was before?

I could not see why he should. In any case, I did not feel that I had much cause for alarm. If Sir Lionel were to run away from me, I certainly should not feel much distress about it. And, short of that, I did not see in what way he could behave worse to me than he had already done.

So I told Maggie that I did not think I was in any danger, and I at last succeeded, by a question

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about one of her friends in England, in turning on a fresh tap of scandal.

That is the worst of Maggie. She is very sweet, and makes a great deal of her friends. But she tells one so many horrid stories about those who are not present, that one can't help wondering what sort of stories she tells, when one is out of the room, about oneself!

Five minutes after she had told me the story about Mrs. Frewen, Sir Lionel and Lord Meltham came in, and Maggie was as sweet to Sir Lionel as if he had been her best friend.

However, it did not spoil my pleasure, and I have enjoyed myself to-day. Jack and I had a grand time. We played at the *petits chevaux*, and we both lost. But I was enjoying myself too much to mind.

Sir Lionel and Maggie and Lord Meltham were together all day, after luncheon, so that Jack and I were by ourselves. We said very little about the situation I was in, but we talked and talked about old times till we both got very sentimental and nearly cried. I know I saw the tears in old Jack's eyes, and it was hard to keep back my own.

Then we all had tea at ——'s, and the Melthams met some people they knew, and they were intro-

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duced to Sir Lionel and to me. They were awfully nice; and to find myself among people of my own sort again was so delightful, and they were all so kind to me, that I felt very happy, and I chattered and laughed and enjoyed myself. Then we came away, and Jack and Lord Meltham walked with us to the station. And Jack told me that he felt quite proud of being my cousin, and said that I was the prettiest woman on the Riviera, and that everybody said so.

I laughed and told him not to be silly. But when we got into the train, I saw that Sir Lionel was also in a very complimentary mood. He began to look at me again as he did in the old slave days, and he told me he had felt very proud of his wife that day.

It worried me as much to hear him pay me these compliments as it pleased me to have them paid by old Jack.

And I said hastily that I didn't deserve to have all these pretty things said to me. But he persisted, and told me how pleased he had been to make the acquaintance of my relations, and hoped I had not made them think he had not treated me well.

"I assure you," he said, "there is nothing I would not do, and no sacrifice I would not make, as I have already proved, to make you perfectly happy."

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"I am happy," I said. "I have enjoyed myself very much to-day, and I am very glad you got on so well with my cousins."

But he was not satisfied.

"You will tell them, won't you, that there is nothing you can wish for that you don't have."

I hesitated. This would have been indeed such a very far-fetched account of my married life as I had lived it up to now that there was no answer I could make that would have pleased him.

"You are very kind," I mumbled at last, looking out of the window; for I was in a corner seat of the train, and he was sitting next to me. The compartment was full, to my great content, for I did not want to have to sustain a confidential sort of conversation, and I was hoping he would not insist upon having one when we got back to Nice. "You give me everything I want, and more than I should ever have thought of wishing for."

I suppose he could tell from my tone that I was not as grateful as my words were, and he said anxiously:

"As for the things that maid of yours stole, I will get you some to replace them, handsomer than those were."

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I did not answer. It was an unfortunate speech of his, for I wanted to forget all about Hanway. Perhaps he saw this, but I think he is very anxious to keep the horrid story from getting known, so that he could not keep silent about it. As he did not speak, he said presently :

“You agree with me, don’t you, that it is better not to make a fuss about the matter, and to threaten to prosecute the woman?”

He seemed to have forgotten that he had told me it was the custom-house people who had taken my things. I began to think that Jack must have said something to let Sir Lionel know my dresses had been recognised upon Hanway.

“I would rather forget all about it, and about her, if I can,” I said hurriedly.

He said nothing more until we reached the Nice station, where we got into a voiture and drove back here.

But when I came into the sitting-room for dinner he took me to one of the windows and said in a low voice, so that the waiters should not hear, that he had sent for another cloak for me, and that one of the best milliners in Nice would call upon me to-

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morrow morning to take my orders for anything I wanted.

Of course it is very generous of him, but as I don't care about dress in the least, I don't know how to seem grateful. Besides, it is not nice to remember why I have to have these new things. However, I could not say so, and to-morrow I suppose I shall have to buy a heap of things that will make me look like an overdressed doll, just when, among all the horrid-looking, painted-faced, overdressed women here, I should like to go about in a sack with a strawberry basket for a hat!

Sir Lionel was very nice to me at dinner, and afterwards he took me to the casino and gave me some money to play with. I dare say he had forgotten that I had already got a nice little hoard. However, I lost to-night, so it's lucky I had something in reserve.

It is wonderful what a difference it has made in Sir Lionel to have met some of my people! He took the greatest care of me, was very civil and complimentary all the evening, and he did not once run away and leave me by myself.

The coming of Jack and his sister has opened a new era for me.

NICE, *March 25th.*

ANOTHER exciting day!

They all came over from Cannes, and we went to a concert at the Sports Club, where we had tea.

I felt horribly shy at first, because I was wearing one of my very smartest dresses, the pale blue with the black velvet lattice-work over it, and Sir Lionel begged so hard that I would wear an enormous black hat which was one of the things the milliner brought round to show me, that I agreed, though I felt sure I should look dreadful in it!

I'm sure it must be nearly a yard across, and it has to be worn all on one side, so that I disappear entirely from one point of view. It has I don't know how many pale blue ostrich feathers on the top, and it is lined with pale blue silk which matches my dress, so that when I was dressed I stared at myself in the glass in consternation, feeling that that ridiculous doll with the light hair and blue eyes, who

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looked about six feet high, couldn't by any possibility be me.

But Sir Lionel was quite excited about my appearance, and paid me ever so many compliments, and told me that at last I was "doing justice to my beauty," and I must dress like that every day.

I see that he likes his wife to suggest "money" in her appearance; so there, alas, is another point of difference between us. For I never feel so happy as when I am in a serge skirt and a blouse, looking, as Sir Lionel would say (in fact he *has* said it already) like a "little dressmaker!"

I had the very uncomfortable feeling that my appearance made what Jack calls "a sensation" when I got to the Sports Club, though I don't know why it should, when there were certainly fifty women there even more overdressed than I!

We met Maggie and Jack and Lord Meltham, who says I am to call him Hugh. But there was a difference in the way Sir Lionel and I were treated, which became more and more marked as the time went on.

Presently Maggie told me that the Hanway story has got about, and that every one is disgusted with Sir Lionel. I am very sorry the thing has got

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known, and when I got an opportunity of speaking to Jack I reproached him for repeating it. But he declares it was not he who spread the story, and I can only suppose that it is Hanway herself who has started it.

It is very unpleasant to have these things talked about, and I feel rather sorry for Sir Lionel. However, I am doing all I can for him by going about with him and by wearing the things he wants me to wear, and as he is becoming much more careful, and as I now have all the liberty I want, I have no doubt that the gossip will die down in a day or two.

Jack, to my great surprise, was delighted with my overdressed get-up. It is easy to see that men are more alike than I had supposed. I think he saw I was disgusted when he told me how nice I looked, better than he had ever seen me look before.

I stared at him disdainfully.

"You like dolls then?" I said haughtily.

"I don't know. But I do know that I like to see a well-dressed woman."

"By well-dressed you mean overdressed," I said severely.

"Oh, no, I don't. Dress has to be appropriate. You would be overdressed if you were to wear that

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get-up for a walk down at Four Oaks, but here it's just right."

"But, Jack, don't you think it is better for a lady to be simply dressed, among all these people who come here merely to show off their money on their backs?"

"It all depends upon what you mean by simplicity. I call your toilet simple. But on you, with your splendid figure, and with your lovely face, everything you have on seems exactly right."

"I feel very awkward."

"You'll soon get over that. You don't look awkward, that's the great thing. And it's not only I who think so; all the men are raving about you. It doesn't do to listen to what they say about Eberhard though. That story will take some living down. He ought to be kicked."

"Oh, well, don't let us talk about him."

"Cis, you'll never get used to that fellow. He's an outsider, and nothing will ever make him anything else. I've met lots of men who were no better born than he, who have been such good chaps at heart that they found their level easily enough and kept it, among men better born and better bred than themselves. But Eberhard's conduct to you shows

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him to be a born cad, and it makes even Meltham angry to mention his name."

"He's kind to me now, and I don't want to say anything more about it," I said. "Now that you and Maggie have come I'm as happy as a bird. I only wish you were staying here instead of at Cannes, so that I could see more of you."

"You will see as much of me as ever you like," said Jack affectionately. "I shall come over every day, if I may."

"I wonder whether you could take me out for walks in the mornings," I said. "There must be the most lovely walks to be had here."

He looked doubtful.

"I don't know quite how we could manage that," he said. "It would be rippin' if we could. But it won't do to make people talk."

"Oh, but you're my cousin!"

"Well, that wouldn't prevent gossip," he said. "There are cousins and cousins. It's a convenient sort of relationship in one way, but then, again, it's not in another."

"Oh, nonsense!" I said impatiently. "If you don't want to take me about, of course I don't want to press my society upon you. But if you have only

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got some silly prudish ideas in your head, I really think they are very much out of place here."

"It's just here where they are not out of place," persisted Jack steadily. There were heaps of people round us, but they were all watching a flying man who was hovering over the sea in his aeroplane, so we were able to talk as comfortably as if we had been in the middle of a desert. "You surely can't suppose, Cis, that I don't want to take you about. What I'm afraid of is that, placed in the very difficult position you're in, as the lovely wife of a wholly impossible man, you would set unkind tongues wagging directly if you were to be seen going about with any one else."

I thought this was silly, and I shrugged my shoulders, much offended.

Then he came close to me and whispered:

"Look here: the truth is we should be stopped directly, and I should have to go away. I want to go on seeing you; I must. But to do that we must have a little caution, a little prudence. You are such a child; you don't know these things. But you might trust me, I think."

And then suddenly I began to see that he was right, for I noticed that one or two people were look-

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ing at Jack and me in the sort of way that makes people think they will say something ill-natured to one another by and bye.

I seem to be learning things very fast now, and I got a lesson this afternoon.

So I left Jack and began talking to somebody else. And then I found out another strange thing: that the dress I had on seemed to help me to get just the right tone among the people I was talking with. Friends of Maggie's and Jack's they were: nice people for the most part. And they all had the same tone, a sort of irresponsible way of talking that seemed flippant and idle at first, but that one falls into the way of easily.

So that presently I found myself talking just like them, and enjoying it.

And at last I had quite a little circle round me, and then I caught sight of two people watching me. The one was Jack, and the other was Sir Lionel.

They both had exactly the same look in their eyes, and it made me rather wish I hadn't made myself so smart.

Hugh had to go away without Maggie, to see an old lady off to Mentone. Then Sir Lionel, who had been very subdued and rather ill-tempered, and who

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was evidently quite aware that he was in everybody's black books, offered to escort Maggie to the train.

This left Jack just the opportunity I knew he had been waiting for, and he told Sir Lionel he would see me back to our hotel. I don't think Sir Lionel quite liked it, but Jack carried me off, and I was in such a hurry to go that I was whisked away before any objection could be made.

Jack and I drove back here in a voiture. I was tired, but I had enjoyed myself so much that I felt quite happy.

I didn't want to talk to Jack even, and when I got out at the hotel I put out my hand and smiled at him, and thanked him for having brought me.

"I'll take you upstairs," he said quietly.

"No, you'd better not come in. I'm really too tired to talk to you."

He laughed.

"As if that mattered—with me!"

He came in, and we came up into this sitting-room, and I sat down and began to try to get at the pins in my hat to take it off. Jack came over and, without saying anything, found the pins and extracted them very cleverly and very gently, one by one.

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"Thank you, Jack," said I. "How clever you are! You'd make a splendid lady's maid."

"Yes," said he. "Better engage me, Cis."

"All right. I won't forget when I want to make another change."

This was an unlucky speech, and I was sorry the moment I had made it, for it reminded us of what I wanted to forget—the recent episode of Hanway and the things she had stolen.

Jack frowned.

"Do you know," he said, "that Sir Godfrey Rayne took Eberhard in hand this afternoon and gave him a dressing down?"

"Who is Sir Godfrey Rayne?" I asked, bewildered, for I had never heard of him.

"What a child you are! Sir Godfrey is a sort of referee for everybody who is anybody, and a word from him is equal to a dozen sermons from, say, the Archbishop of Canterbury."

"And what did he say to Sir Lionel?"

"What didn't he say? Nobody heard, of course; but it was easy to see, by his looks, and by your husband's too, what sort of things he was saying. I bet, Cis, that Eberhard won't venture to insult you

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again in a hurry. If he does he'll be kicked out of decent society."

I sat with my hands round my knee, trembling a little, not quite knowing whether I was glad or sorry that so much trouble was being taken on my account. On the one hand, it made me certain that I should never again have to put up with the slights and annoyances I had suffered in Paris and on my first arrival here. But, on the other hand, it made me ashamed to think that my affairs were a subject of gossip to everybody.

What a different thing marriage is, as I know it, from what I, in the old ignorant days, imagined it to be, when I thought of it only as meaning days with Jack, without his having to go away!

And now it was Jack himself who was telling me these things—Jack, as kind and as nice as ever, but different—now that I know so much more about life and what things mean!

"I'm sorry!" I said in a low voice.

"Never mind. Don't think about it any more."

He was leaning over the back of the settee on which I was sitting. What a comfort it was to have him near me again!

And yet——

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We were silent for a few moments. Then I began to undo the buttons of the long white gloves I was wearing. Jack put out his hand and reached over me far enough to undo the buttons of my left-hand glove. Then, raising my hand quickly to his lips, he kissed it.

His lips were burning, and I shivered.

"Don't," I said hoarsely.

"All right." He was still holding my left hand, and I felt that his own were trembling. A horrible impulse urged me to turn towards him, to put my right hand where my left was, to meet his eyes.

But I knew I must not do this. I fought with myself, half frightened, half angry.

"You had better go away," I said.

My voice sounded faint and weak. I felt his grasp growing tighter on the hand he held.

"Why?"

I did not at once answer.

A thousand reasons for his leaving me were ready in my brain, and one strong above all that I did not dare to utter.

"Why must I go?" he repeated passionately.

I tried to draw my hand away, but it seemed as if all the strength had gone out of me. I felt like

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a reed, a wisp of hay, a feather, anything that is without the power of resistance, of standing upright.

It was he who spoke next, and his voice was changed. It seemed to be broken and hoarse, but with something in every tone that went straight down to my heart, making me ready to yield to him, to let him stay, as he asked to do.

But yet I knew that I must not, that I dared not.

"Why may I not stay? Your old Jack, eh, little Cis?"

I wanted to scold him for speaking to me in that voice, for making me feel as I was feeling.

He was a man; he knew so much more than I; surely he must know what he was doing to me, how he was melting down principles that ought to be hard and strong, and making me forget what I ought to remember!

For a moment my hand rested trembling in his, and it was as much as I could do not to let my fingers curl round his, affectionately, convulsively.

Then I got back some of my self-command, and tried to laugh.

"Old Jack ought to see that I'm tired, and that the kindest thing he could do would be to leave me

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to rest a little, since I shall certainly have to go out again after dinner. And if I have to go without any rest first, I shall lose all that magnificent reputation for good looks which old Jack himself had been the first to assure me I've got," I said.

"Well, can't you rest with me in the room? Let me help you off with your things. Of course, you can't rest in all that finery. But you can change into your tea-gown and be as lazy as you like."

"No, I can't. It's all fastened up the back."

"Let me unfasten it for you. You said I was a capital lady's maid."

"No."

"Why not? Do you think I'm not clever enough?"

"No, of course not. But someone might come in and think it odd I should let you do it."

"Well, somebody has to do it. Didn't you tell me you were without a maid now?"

"Yes. But the chambermaid comes when I ring."

"Well, ring for her now. Anything rather than that I should be turned out."

"But you'd better go, Jack, before Sir Lionel comes."

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"Oh, he won't say a word. I bet you he'll be as meek as a lamb to-day."

"But I *want* you to go!"

"What! After all your talk about my going about with you?"

I had felt sure he would say that, and I was not prepared with an answer. The truth was, though I would not for the world have told him so, that I had suddenly grown afraid of myself, afraid of him, and conscious that, if I were to let myself go ever so little, I should break down into silliness, into confidences which I ought not to make, into confession that I was unhappy and lonely.

Lonely! Yes, that was what I felt. And somehow this loneliness seemed worse when Jack was there than when I was alone. We were getting into an emotional state which I dreaded to encourage. And it was strange to think back to the time when I should just have cried, and have let Jack dry my eyes and tell me not to be a goose.

I began to be angry with him for not understanding, or rather for pretending not to understand.

I stamped my foot impatiently on the floor and sat up on the settee, trying to drag my hand away

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from him. But he just slid round the end and laughed at me.

"You did want me to take you for walks, now didn't you?"

"Walks. Yes, that's different. I never asked you to come and tease me like this."

"Do you mean that I'm never to come and see you, except formally, on the days when you 'receive,' Lady Cecilia?"

"Oh, don't be silly. No. I only mean that I really, really want to be alone now."

"All right. Give me a kiss, and I'll go at once."

He was close to me. For one moment I was inclined to let him kiss me, and to kiss him back. But the next I sprang up with a laugh, and told him he was absurd, and that he must go away at once and not tease me any more.

Then he caught me and kissed me against my will. Oh, yes, it was against my will, though I didn't try to get away. I couldn't. I felt as if I was paralysed, and yet as if I was glad not to be able to get away.

Suddenly I released myself—so suddenly that I almost fell on the floor.

"How could you?" I said in a whisper. "You have no right——"

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"No right to love you? Why not? Who has a better right than I? Cis, don't you want me to love you, child? You look so lonely, so helpless, it makes my heart bleed to see you!"

I could only repeat the same words:

"You have no right, no right. I've done nothing to make you think of me like that."

"I think of you as a martyr, nothing less, Cis. You have been sacrificed to other people's needs."

"Nonsense. I'm not a martyr. But if I were that's no reason why you should treat me as if I were unworthy of respect."

"Cis, how can you say such things!"

"I say it because it's true. You know so much that you ought to treat me beautifully!"

I burst into tears and threw myself upon the sofa, and Jack, very penitent and gentle, stood near me and begged to be forgiven.

"Don't cry, Cis; you make me feel such a brute," he said. "Indeed I didn't mean to make you cry. Why should you cry about it? Why should you be angry with me for loving you, for being mad when I see you thrown away?"

I sat up suddenly, drying my eyes.

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"I'm angry," I said, "because you seem to think it doesn't matter how you treat me now."

"Come, Cis, my darling, that isn't fair."

"And don't call me darling. You never dared to before."

He said nothing for a minute, and I sat sobbing quietly and still snivelling a little. Then he bent down and laid one hand on the end of the sofa, and asked in a low voice:

"Shall I go away, then?"

I bowed my head without saying anything. But he did not go at once. So presently I looked up and saw him looking, oh, so sorry and so kind and so handsome and—well, just old Jack! And as I looked up he turned to go away.

I do believe that it was only just a trick and that he didn't mean to go. But to see him turn away from me was more than I could bear.

"Jack, don't go! Don't go like that," I said.

He came back quietly, so as not to frighten me, and sat down beside me on the sofa, and held one hand while with the other I kept on mopping my poor red eyes. And while we sat like that, neither of us saying a word, suddenly I heard a sound, and

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I looked up and I saw that Sir Lionel was in the room, glowering at us.

I cried out, "Oh!" and Jack started up.

Sir Lionel laughed, and frowned still more.

"So this is how you take advantage of my hospitality," he said to Jack.

But before Jack could make any answer I had come between them, and I said quickly:

"Jack is my cousin. What advantage has he taken?"

Sir Lionel frowned at me and then pushed me aside.

Jack said:

"I brought Cecilia back from the casino, Sir Lionel. I don't know how that can be called taking advantage of your hospitality. I have done nothing else."

I was beginning to wonder how much Sir Lionel had heard or seen. And as I wondered I caught sight of myself in a mirror, and saw that between my struggle with Jack and my burying my head on the sofa to cry, I had made my hair very untidy. So that even if Sir Lionel had seen and heard nothing, he could easily guess that Jack and I had not been sitting upright and solemn, like

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school-children at a tea-party, all the time.

And then there were my red eyes and my drenched handkerchief!

We all stood rather awkwardly, and from the fact that Sir Lionel did not seem to know quite what tone to take I gathered courage, and was sure that he knew nothing that it mattered his knowing.

Indeed, there was no reason why he should have resented it, if he had seen Jack kiss me, for I do think that when a man allows himself so much liberty as he does, he has no right to be very strict with his wife.

So I broke the silence myself.

"Jack," I said, and I held out my hand to him as I spoke, "it was very good of you to bring me home. Thank you very much. Give my love to Maggie, and tell her I'll write about the theatre party. Good-bye."

Then, with what I considered an inspiration, I put up my face for Jack to kiss. My heart was beating very fast, but I thought that if I did this, it would be the best possible way, to show Sir Lionel that we were on cousinly terms. And Jack was clever enough to understand, and he gave me a little

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kiss on the cheek and said good-bye, and promised to give my message, and then he bowed to Sir Lionel and went out.

I think he felt rather frightened though, for at the door he looked at me nervously. But I was standing before a mirror by that time, fastening up my hair, and I only saw the reflection of his face, and nodded reassuringly.

But I did not feel very easy in my mind, especially when I heard Sir Lionel's heavy step behind me, and turning, found that he had come close to me, with a most disagreeable expression on his face.

He was very red, and a great vein was swollen up on his forehead, making him look frightful.

He stood in my way so that I could not pass him, so I went to the sofa where I had left my hat and picked it up with my gloves.

"When is my new maid coming?" I asked, for the sake of saying something.

"I don't know. I told Lady Rushbury you were without one."

He spoke sulkily, and I saw that, by luck rather than judgment, I had made a fortunate opening, since the subject of the maid was one which Sir Lionel felt sore about.

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"It doesn't really matter. Down at Four Oaks I used sometimes to do without one. My old nurse, Kelly, was often ill, and I wouldn't have anybody else about me."

I was on my way to the door, but my boasted cleverness in waiting on myself being put to an awkward test, I let the hat fall on the floor.

Sir Lionel picked it up, and holding it, said:

"So you let your cousin make love to you?"

He was not so aggressive as I had expected, though he spoke in a sulky tone.

"No, I don't let any one make love to me," I said.

"You let him kiss you."

"Well, he is my cousin."

"I disapprove of such familiarity."

I looked down and said nothing, but I suppose the expression of my face was pretty eloquent, for he went on quickly:

"A woman, especially a beautiful woman, can't be too careful. I hope Lady Rushbury's daughter is not one of those new women who think they are the same as men."

"Certainly, I shouldn't think that."

He found it a little difficult to go on, I believe,

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for he fumbled with my hat and pulled one of the feathers out.

"I have been made to suffer a good deal on your account by persons who call themselves your friends," he said at last, glaring at me rather angrily.

But it was strange to me to note that, since I had that day taken a new sort of position and shown myself capable of holding my own a little, he was much more respectful, and though he was in a very bad temper, he took care to keep control over himself.

"That was not my fault," I said gently.

"Well, no, I don't say it was. But thinking as highly of you as I do, and being rated as I was for not treating you better, it is a surprise to me to find that—that——"

"There is nothing that you need be surprised at," I said.

"I hope you will not invite your cousin here again."

The blood surged up into my head, and I determined, once for all, to make a stand.

"I can't promise never to see my friends," I said, speaking in jerks.

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"I didn't ask that. But to receive young men—alone——"

"Surely you may leave it to my discretion."

I was growing quite brave. Sir Lionel looked at me and tried another way of treating me. He became quite civil and flattering, and said:

"If you were not so handsome, Cecilia, it wouldn't matter. But as it is, you have already made yourself quite a name for your beauty, and you will find yourself watched, and everything you do will be noted and commented on. I was proud of my wife to-day, very proud. I found myself looking forward to the time when she will receive my guests—and royalty among them—in a palace in London. And I know that she will do the honours like a princess."

As he said these flattering things he was coming nearer and nearer to me, looking at me as if he would eat me, and biting the feather out of my hat until I could see all his false teeth and the gold setting, and he looked like a wild animal ready to pounce on its prey.

I drew my breath very fast and went quickly to the door, avoiding him.

"If you can kiss your cousin," he said sharply, as

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he sprang after me, "surely you can kiss your husband."

But I had tasted freedom, and I was more spirited than I had been at first.

"If we were really husband and wife," I said quickly, in a tone so hoarse that it was not like my voice at all, "it would be different. But we are not. I have never been your wife, and you have never been my husband."

"What do you mean?"

He was really shocked, and he stared at me with starting eyeballs. But I was too much excited to be stopped now, and I said what had been in my mind a long time.

"Why should one be married in a church, asking God's blessing and making vows to each other, if marriage meant nothing more than it means to you?"

He was taken aback. And the strange thing was that he was as truly shocked and disgusted as if I had said something very dreadful, very wicked.

"What do you mean?" he stammered again, evidently overwhelmed to find the submissive creature he had married transformed into a woman who could

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think for herself and speak for herself. "What have you to complain of now?"

"Nothing, nothing. I don't complain. But you know you said just now that you were my husband, and you spoke as if you had rights that other men had not."

He stared at me, growing redder than ever.

"You don't mean to deny that, I should think."

"I deny it."

He moved forward and took hold of the back of a chair.

"You have got some strange notions into your head from someone," he said suspiciously. "You were not like this—you didn't take this tone, when—when we were first married."

"No. I was too much taken by surprise. I hadn't had time to think. I was like a lamb that had been caught and tied up ready to be killed. And you imposed upon my ignorance, Sir Lionel."

He looked up quickly when I called him that. Usually I didn't call him anything, and never have I used his Christian name without any prefix.

He stared at me fiercely, and then struck the back of the chair with so much force that he hurt his hand.

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"It's your d——d mother has put you up to this, or else your d——d cousin," he said through his teeth.

I shook my head.

"No, it isn't. It's my d——d husband," I said.

I was rather frightened myself when I made this retort, which was not very ladylike. But it almost paralysed Sir Lionel. He stared at me as if he had never seen me properly before.

"W-w-what has made you take this tone with me?" he stammered out at last, "if not th-th-these people of yours? And wh-wh-what do you mean by calling me your husband at one moment, and then saying the next that I'm nothing of the sort?"

I had to think a little before I could answer this, because I saw that I had contradicted myself. At last I said:

"I thought you were asking too much of me when you expected me not to see my friends. You might, in other circumstances, have had the right to ask me that, but as it is, I think you have not."

"Well, well."

"In that way it seems to me you have no right to expect me to obey as if things had been different between us."

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"How different?"

"Well, if you had been content with one wife."

He turned from me suddenly, cursing and storming.

I at once took advantage of the opportunity, and leaving my hat in his hands, I slid round the door and ran to my room, knowing that he would not dare to follow me there.

And I have never left my room since, for I could not dine with him and go out after that scene. So I sent down word that I had gone to bed with a headache, and indeed it is true that my head throbs and I can scarcely see to write this.

Oh, what is going to happen now? I feel as if a new path had suddenly opened out before me, and that I don't quite know where it is going to lead to!

NICE, *March 28th.*

I HAVE had to let two days pass without writing in my diary, for I have had too much to do and to think about to be able to write.

The day before yesterday began all right, for Sir Lionel, whom I felt rather shy about meeting, was quite nice in the morning, and seemed to have forgotten all about the scene of the evening before.

He asked me particularly what I was going to wear in the afternoon at Cannes, where we were going to meet the Melthams, and when I suggested wearing the same dress again, the pale blue that had been so much approved of, he said he should prefer me to wear something fresh.

It seemed shockingly extravagant, but I said I would, and in the afternoon I put on another of the dresses I brought with me from London, and which I am convinced Sir Lionel paid for.

This one was white cashmere, embroidered with white silk, slit up the sleeves to show heliotrope silk,

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and worn with an underskirt of heliotrope silk with ever so many frills. With this I wore another huge hat, all black, with one enormously long white ostrich feather. And I carried a white silk-embroidered sunshade lined with heliotrope.

I begin already to see how the love of dress may grow upon a woman until she becomes recklessly extravagant, for I did feel a pleasure of a sort in seeing myself transformed from a blue doll to a white doll, and in wondering what old Kelly and Miss Trood would say, and old Nannie and the Hawkinses, if they could see me dressed up like this!

Really I make quite a nice doll, not very like life, but quite an admirable lay-figure for showing off ridiculously expensive clothes!

Sir Lionel was delighted, and complimented me on my improvement in "style." I can see that his ideal of a wife is a woman who would wear three new dresses every day.

My ideal husband is a man who would let me run about all day in a serge coat and skirt, and then change in the evening into a little Japanese silk frock that I could send to the cleaner's when it got soiled!

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We met Jack and the Melthams, and I had a lovely time, for when we got to the tennis-ground Jack and I went away together, and sat where we could talk.

He was very sweet and humble and kind, and hoped Sir Lionel had not been very disagreeable to me about him.

And when I told him it was all right, and that I had stood up to him, and sort of asserted my right to see my friends, he said it was splendid of me, and that I should presently find things straightening out until I had made out my own course of life and could follow it without hindrance.

Then we got sentimental again, and I was so happy that I was sorry when Maggie came up and carried me off, telling Jack he mustn't let me *afficher* myself with him like that.

He looked very cross, but she would have her way, and she and I walked away together. I knew that I was in for a tiresome gossip, and that she wanted to tell me all the scandals she knew. It takes a long time for Maggie to get through her list, for she seems to know a story that she calls "good" or "amusing" about every other person on the Riviera.

But I soon found that it was worse than this: it

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was about Sir Lionel and myself and Jack that she wanted to talk.

"My dear Cis," she began, "I want very much to give you a little advice, which I know you will be clever enough to act upon. You have made a great sensation here by your beauty and by the exquisite taste of your dress, and Sir Lionel is simply delighted with you, and so proud that you have only to show a little tact to have it all your own way with him."

I frowned. I hate the very word "tact." It just means falsehood and pretending things.

"Yes, I know he is pleased," I said.

"And somebody else is displeased. It's hateful to have to tell such a young woman as you are about such things, but I suppose you have heard of Dolly Frewen?"

I didn't like hearing my cousin speak of this woman in that familiar way, but as I knew whom she meant, I had to say, "Yes."

"Well, she is staying at Monte Carlo, and Sir Lionel is visiting her constantly."

"Maggie, please don't tell me these things. As long as Sir Lionel lets me live in my own way, independent of him, as I am doing, I can say nothing.

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Maggie, you know what sort of marriage mine was, and you ought not to try to make me bitterer against him. What he does I prefer not to know anything about, and as long as I see nothing I want to hear nothing too."

"Yes, dear, that would be all very well if it could go on. But you don't understand the situation. This woman is not only very pretty; she is also very clever and very determined. She has made up her mind to be Sir Lionel's wife, and she is more likely to succeed now that he has been forced into a position with regard to you which hurts his pride. Don't you see?"

I didn't, and I told her so.

She gave a sigh, and threw up her eyes, as if she were talking to an obstinate child.

"Do you really think a man of the type of your husband will be content for ever just to let you do as you like, and to remain respectfully in the background?"

I grew restless and excited.

"If he is not satisfied I shall go back home. I am not going through what I went through in Paris. Papa wouldn't let me, or even Mama. And besides—— Oh, I can't, I can't."

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Maggie was very persuasive and gentle, as she put her hand through my arm.

"You will have to learn to overlook a little and to forgive much," she said. "Otherwise it will end in your coming to grief. Listen. Sir Lionel may not have been very much in love with you when he married you; probably he was not. But now he is falling more in love with you every day——"

I shook her off angrily.

"I don't want him to. I could never like him, never, never," I said quickly.

"You could never be in love with him, I dare say," she said suavely. "But you could put up with him if he were really to turn over a new leaf."

"No, no. You don't know him! A man who could treat me as he did."

"My dear, you must make allowances, you really must. There's no sense in not making the best of it now."

"But if I'm satisfied, and he's satisfied——"

"Unfortunately, you are neither of you satisfied."

Maggie is a great chatterbox, and artificial, and not very sympathetic to me. But she is too clever not to make one listen when she chooses. And she did choose then.

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"What do you mean?" I said in a low voice.

"Well, unless you encourage Sir Lionel, and do your best to please him, somebody else will."

"Oh, I know that. And somebody will go on pleasing him. But it won't be always the same somebody, you know, Maggie. Sir Lionel would never be satisfied with only one."

"He might for a time at least. As I say, you will probably find it wise to be indulgent; but to begin with, I think you will find things work better now if you will be forgiving."

"I can't, I can't. Oh, Maggie, I don't like him."

"My dear child, nobody expects that of you. But you might put up with him. It will be better for him, and much, much better for you."

"Why do you interfere, Maggie, when we are satisfied to go on as we are going?"

"It can't go on," said she quickly. "Sir Lionel complains of you, and there's Mrs. Frewen at Monte Carlo. It will be either she or you. It's horrid, it's humiliating to have to admit it; but unless you give way a little, and are kind, something will happen, and Dolly will end by getting her wish and becoming Lady Eberhard."

"How can she?" I asked, bewildered.

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Maggie hesitated.

"Sir Lionel will find a way of getting rid of you."

I grew scarlet.

"How can he, when I have done no wrong?"

Maggie looked at me quite solemnly.

"My dear child, you are much too pretty to be left alone. If your husband is not allowed to make love to you, somebody else will, and sooner or later he will get the excuse he wants."

I was very angry with her.

"It is shameful that you should suspect me of doing anything to give him an excuse for getting rid of me," I cried. "And you all contradict each other, for I was told that what he wanted was to make a marriage which would take him into society. Well, if he treats me badly, he will go out again."

"I'm not so sure. It's comparatively easy to keep in society, when one's got in, as long as the money holds out," said Maggie, who seems to know a great deal about these things. "And you have a very strong rival. Dolly Frewen works upon his irritation against you——"

"But what have I done to irritate him?" said I.

"It is maddening to a man like that, used to having his own way in everything, to find he can't have

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it with his own wife. Cis, take my advice. He is falling in love with you. Take advantage of the fact to get rid of Mrs. Frewen. If you make that a condition—now, when you are in the very prime of your beauty, and now that you have just made a social success, you will have things all your own way.”

“I don’t want to. Oh, wait, wait. Don’t hurry me into—into——”

I was stammering, not knowing what I said. But Maggie was deliberate, and she went on:

“You must give up Jack.”

“I won’t,” said I promptly.

“You must. He is selfish, and he would think nothing of compromising you, just for the sake of a few weeks’ pleasure, which can only end in one way.”

This was as unkind as it was silly, to run down poor Jack to me. I wouldn’t listen to another word, but got away from her and began to talk to someone else.

But the talk with her spoiled my day, for it made me self-conscious both with Jack and with Sir Lionel, and I was glad to come back to Nice to escape the worry and excitement of it all.

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I found my new maid had arrived, of which I was very glad.

She is a nice, quiet person, very different from Hanway. Jack says discretion oozes out of her, but after what happened last night I am not so sure about that!

Her name is Dawes.

Yesterday afternoon I had a terrible scene with Sir Lionel. We had an engagement with some friends of the Melthams at Mentone, but I felt so tired with all I have done the last few days, that, as it was raining, I asked Sir Lionel if I could stay at home and rest. He agreed, and I put on my rose-coloured tea-gown with the cream lace, and lay down on the sofa in my own little sitting-room. Then I sent Dawes away and closed my eyes and was beginning to feel quite drowsy, when there was a knock at the door, and when I said "Come in," Sir Lionel came.

I jumped up directly, but he told me to lie down again, and he brought a chair to the side of the couch, and asked quite nicely if I didn't think we could get on better than we had been doing.

I sat up, and with my heart beating very fast told him I was quite ready to take any suggestion he had

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to make, and said that I was very sorry if he had found me rather childish and stupid, and that, of course, I was so unused to any sort of life but the quiet country jog-trot at Fouroaks that I was bewildered by the great change.

"Yes," he said, "I quite see that. But it is the ease with which you have dropped into the ways of a society woman which surprises me."

"Oh, no," I said, "I feel that I'm still very awkward."

But he was determined to be complimentary.

"Not at all. I never saw a lady more able to hold her own. You are quite charming, quite charming. I am only sorry that misunderstandings should have arisen between us, and—and prevented our being on better terms."

I was getting very nervous, for now that I had had a few days of my liberty, I disliked more than ever the thought of a change.

I did not want to think so, but I suppose the truth is that I have been seeing old Jack, whom I was always fond of, and whom I thought, when I was scarcely more than a child, that I should marry. So that now Sir Lionel, with his red face and his false teeth, and the toupee he wears to cover the

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bald patch on his head, seems to me more odious than ever.

I hung my head and said nothing.

He came nearer to me, and said :

“You know what I mean? I am afraid I seemed to neglect you at first, and that you were offended, and inclined to think I set no proper value on my beautiful wife. But I assure you it was not so. I admired you from the first moment I saw you, as you may remember, running upstairs with one shoe off.”

He laughed, and I tried to. But the fact is that the thought of all that unlucky meeting had meant for me made me much more inclined to cry!

“I remember,” I said in a husky, stifled voice.

“Well, then, if I thought you lovely in an old ulster, with one shoe off, you may guess that I admired you still more when you were dressed in becoming and handsome gowns,” he said. “I saw that you were a jewel worthy of any setting, and I took care that the setting should be worthy of the jewel. You will allow that, I think.”

“You have been very generous,” I said in the same stifled voice.

And all the while I was sitting in a sort of

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pinched-up attitude, feeling like a fool, and yet not able to be or to seem at my ease.

"I think perhaps those things might be taken as, in some measure, a set-off against engagements which I had to fulfil which took me away from you more than you may have thought quite fair."

I said nothing. In the case of ordinary business engagements I should have had no right to complain, but as it was I knew that his engagements had been of another kind. And yet I did not want to reproach him with matters which had been discussed and settled between Mama and him, and done with altogether, as I had hoped.

"I am hoping," he said quite gently, putting his face close to mine, "that you will have forgiven me."

To see him so close to me made me want to shudder, and to prevent his seeing this I got up and walked across the room to fetch my smelling-bottle, which I luckily saw lying on a table under the window. Sir Lionel rose stiffly, looking very angry.

"Indeed, I hope I am not vindictive," I said leaning against the table and speaking very quickly, and in a nervous way that I was afraid must add to his irritation, although I could not help it. "I have been quite satisfied with the arrangement you came to

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with Mama, and I thank you for keeping it so honourably."

He frowned heavily at me, and spoke in a thick voice, which showed him to be very angry indeed.

"What arrangement?" thundered he, staring at me and thumping down on the floor the chair he had been sitting on.

I drew a long breath that sounded just like a sob. I did not know what to say. I did not want a discussion, and as for forgiveness as he meant it, the thought revolted me, knowing what I knew, knowing that Mrs. Frewen was staying at Monte Carlo, and that people talk as they do about her and Sir Lionel.

"I mean," I said quickly, "that I prefer to be on the terms we are on. While" —I hesitated, and then, as he glared at me, I blurted it out as best I could—"while you—you live your life, I think it is only fair I should be allowed to live mine. You think it fair, I know, and I am grateful to you for allowing it."

I was just as gentle, just as persuasive, as I knew how to be, but he was not at all appeased.

He came towards me with his face so red and the

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vein in his forehead so large that I thought he scarcely looked human.

"Rot!" he said roughly. "There's no fairness in it, and I'm not going to put up with it any longer. I'm not going to be made a laughing-stock. I'm not going to allow you to go about with that young Eardington, and to spoon with him and with half a dozen other fellows, while I'm kept at arm's length. I've considered your feelings; I've done what no other men would have done, in allowing your mother to dictate to me, in putting up with your whims and fancies. But I'll have no more of it. You are my wife, and you must treat me as your husband."

I shrank back. I was really frightened, for he looked as if he would kill me. My movement enraged him still more. He stamped and swore, and seized me by the wrist.

"Now then," said he, "I'll have no nonsense. Don't pretend you're afraid of me; the boot is on the other leg. Kiss me, and say you're sorry for having put on these airs."

He dragged me towards him and kissed me roughly. I shrank; I could not help it.

The worst of it was that he at once made a guess

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at the reason, and I did not know whether it was not the true one.

"You won't kiss me now," he said furiously. "Why not? Why not? Is it because you've been kissing someone else? Someone you like better?"

Luckily, this was said so offensively that it gave me an excuse for being offended. I tried to wriggle myself out of his great sinewy hands.

"I don't kiss any one," I said. "I don't want to. If I did could you say anything? When I know all about—Mrs. Frewen?"

It was awful to have to say this, and I could feel myself growing hot and crimson as I said the name. But I could think of no other way to protect myself, and I knew that this would be an effectual one.

It was. He stepped back at once and stared at me, no longer furious, but sullen.

"What do you know about her? And who told you?" he said sulkily. "Those d——d relations of yours at Cannes, I suppose? Young Eardington himself perhaps?"

"What does it matter who said it, when you can't deny it's true?" I said. "If you could tell me it was not true I would do whatever you wished. I'm sure

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you know I have no wish to be unfair. Only it must be fair on both sides."

I was getting back a little courage, for I could see that my words had already had the effect of calming him down. It was not pleasant to have to deal with a sullen man, but it was easier than to deal with one mad with anger. Besides, he saw that there was sense in what I said. Men are not like women; I think you can always reason with a man, and he will always see both sides if you hold on and insist that he shall. At least I know that is so with the few men I have known—Papa, and Jack, and now Sir Lionel.

He flung himself into a chair so heavily that it creaked, and said sulkily:

"What is it you want?"

What I did really want was to go on as we are going; but I had already told him that, and it had made him angry, so I said:

"I want a husband who is faithful to me."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"You've been put up to this, of course."

"No, I haven't. But if I had, am I asking too much?"

"I think you are. You are very young and in-

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experienced, and you don't know much of the world. There is a difference, an enormous difference, between men and women."

"Oh, yes, I'm sure of that," said I readily.

He scowled at me.

"And yet I don't know that," he said aggressively. "Women are supposed to be much better than men, and to be made of a different clay altogether. But it seems, after all, that a woman can't do without lovers, however high she holds herself."

I did feel a little guilty, because, though it was against my will, Jack had once kissed me like a lover. I suppose I grew red, for he became angry again.

"Now understand," said he, "that I don't admit all you contend for. I consider that you would have been well advised if you had not made stipulations. But if I have to submit to stipulations, then so must you."

I knew that I was showing resentment, try as I might to conceal it. For indeed I felt angry, bitterly angry that he should dare to speak in this accusing way. He laughed at me, mocking my confusion.

"If I don't see Mrs. Frewen," he said, "you don't see Eardington, mind that."

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I said nothing. It was not because I felt nothing; I was too angry to trust myself to speak.

"That's only fair," he went on. "If I'm to give up my friends, you must give up yours."

"It's not the same thing," I said hoarsely.

"But I say it is. You admit you've kissed Eardington."

"Of course. He's my cousin. You saw me kiss him yourself."

He got up and came over to me.

"You kiss him because he is your cousin?" he glowered at me.

"Why yes, of course."

"Then why don't you kiss me because I'm your husband?"

I shuddered; I couldn't help it. I believe it was because he looked so ugly, with his red face and his horrid eyes. He laid his hand on my shoulder, gripping it hard. I pushed him away.

"I—I—I don't want to kiss—anybody," I hissed out in a whisper.

"That's a lie. I've made you a fair offer, and you want to wriggle out of your side of the bargain. Come now; will you reconsider it? Will you give up Eardington, this precious cousin, who

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is nothing to you, you know, if I give up—Mrs. Frewen?”

I burst into tears. I felt like a mouse that had been caught in a trap, and the only feeling I was conscious of was a sick disgust of Sir Lionel, of myself, of life itself.

“Will you give him up?” repeated Sir Lionel loudly.

“Oh! I—I suppose so,” I sobbed out. “I’m ready to give up everybody, if only you will treat me properly.”

But as I said the words, I could not help hoping with all my heart that he would not agree to the bargain, for I felt that I hated him, that he was so coarse, so brutal in his cynical confessions to me, that I could never, never bear to have him near me.

Once I had hoped that I might grow to love my husband, and that he would love me. Now I felt that the first was absolutely impossible, and that the last was the very thing I least desired.

My tears did not, I think, soften Sir Lionel, but they disconcerted him. He walked up and down the room impatiently; I heard him without looking up, and I could hear him too muttering to himself in no very kindly way, so that I was afraid to speak

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again. Gradually my sobs died down, and I sat up just far enough to wipe my eyes. Then, unexpectedly, I found his hand on my shoulder, and, not being prepared for the touch, I was conscious that I shivered.

Then, of course, the whole thing began over again.

He swore, he grumbled, and then he sneered.

"You haven't learnt Mama's lessons very well, after all," he said in a mocking tone. "She can always be sweet when there's anything to be gained by it, but it seems you can't be even civil when your whole future depends upon your behaviour. You surely don't suppose I'm going to be treated like this, as if I were a leper, while you are living with the state of a princess, and wearing jewels that might have belonged to an empress!"

I sat up, rather bewildered.

"I'm sorry," I said, "very sorry that I can't do anything to please you. I don't care for jewellery, and I only wore those pearls last night because you told me to. I will give them back to you."

"If you don't care for them, give them back to me by all means. I dare say I can find someone who will appreciate them," said Sir Lionel bluntly. "But

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you know, I suppose, that they are worth ten thousand pounds, and that such pearls are not usually worn except by women of good position. They are not showy enough for women of another sort, who prefer the glitter of diamonds."

I certainly did not want to hear these things said, so I began to walk towards the door.

"Where are you going?" said he.

"I will send you the pearls," I said.

"D——n the pearls. I bought them for my wife, and as long as you are my wife you will keep them and wear them. My wife, do you understand? It is of no use complaining that I'm fond of another woman, and promising to give up the man you are fond of, if you keep me at arm's length."

I couldn't answer. I was afraid of breaking down again. But I bent my head in assent, and I wondered how my father and mother could ever have given me to this man. Surely they, who were experienced, and who knew the world, might have found out how coarse-fibred he was, and how impossible it was that I could ever even pretend to care for him!

As I said nothing, though I stood submissively enough, he presently went on again:

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"That's the worst of your high-bred ladies: they won't recognise the fact that they're only women after all. If they did, if they were satisfied to be treated as women, to be loved as women, they wouldn't run the risk they do of being superseded by others who are not too high bred to be feminine."

What could I say? I can't think that it is anything but feminine to resent being treated as Sir Lionel has treated me, as if I had no right to anything but good lodging and handsome clothes.

He went on in the same strain after a little pause, during which I stood still, with my hands clasped, looking down at the carpet, while he still walked about.

"You sneer at Mrs. Frewen, and you think yourself a million times better than she. But where is the great superiority? It seems to me there's only this difference between you, that you expect to get everything for nothing, and she doesn't."

Then suddenly I got courage to speak. I walked back, and holding the end of the sofa, I said:

"Well, if I do expect to get everything, I am properly punished, for I certainly don't get it. I don't even get spoken to as if I were a gentlewoman

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at all. But I can quite understand that there may be a reason for that."

My voice was very weak and broken and hoarse, but I think the way in which I looked at him made my meaning plain.

"I suppose you mean that I am not a gentleman," he said roughly. "Well, I am the man your parents thought good enough for their daughter's husband."

"I think you ought to give up reproaching me for what they did, and remember that, after all it was not they who asked you to marry me, but you who asked to marry me. I was the only person left out of the matter. And, while you may have cause of complaint—for what I know—I certainly have more, since I was the only person concerned who had no voice in the matter."

I did not speak angrily; I felt too broken and too miserable for that. I just stood hanging in a feeble and helpless way to the end of the sofa, and made my speech, which sounded to me rather silly and ineffectual even while I made it—speaking in little jerks, and sometimes dropping into a husky whisper.

And so the long, weary wrangle ended, and I went sobbing out of the room, with nothing settled,

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nothing cleared up, but just with fresh irritation on the part of each of us.

I went to my own bedroom and threw myself down on the bed and cried my heart out.

I had a fancy, in about an hour's time, that I heard Sir Lionel come to the door and wait there a little while and then go away again. But if so, he said nothing about it when I met him at dinner-time, and so far from being kind because he saw, as he must have done, that my eyes were red and swollen, he just scowled at me across the flowers, and said cuttingly that I mustn't go out that evening.

From which I gathered that he thought I did not look handsome enough to do justice to his pearls and his Paris frocks!

I agreed with eagerness that I had better stay at home, and he went out alone as soon as dinner was over, while I went to my own sitting-room, and, as my head ached fearfully, lay down to rest a little before writing to Mama.

I think perhaps I may have dozed a short time, but presently I heard some whispering at the door, and I called out:

"Who's that?"

Nobody answered, and the whispering left off.

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I lay back again and shut my eyes, and by and by I put out my right hand to take the smelling-bottle from a little table beside me. But I found no table there, and I screamed a little when I found my hand taken and held.

I opened my eyes without speaking and found myself looking into those of Jack.

In the first moment I felt so passionately glad to see him that I forgot everything else, and just gave a sort of laugh and a sob and said nothing at all. And I let him keep my hand in his and put his lips to it and then hold it and caress it in his hands.

Then I tried to draw it away.

"Jack," I said, "how did you get in? You mustn't, you know. You must go away."

"Oh, rot! You can't be left to cry your eyes out all day long."

"But how did you dare to come in here?"

"That dear old thing Dawes told me you were crying all by yourself——"

"I wasn't."

"Never mind. That was what she told me."

"I shall send her away. I won't be spied upon by my own maid——"

"All right, all right. Just listen, will you, in-

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stead of flying into an unladylike rage when you're spoken to."

"But you don't know these women as well as I do! She has let you come in, which she had no business to do, and then she will tell Sir Lionel all about it."

"Well, if she did, what is there to tell him?"

I sat up.

"You don't understand. I've promised him not to see you."

"What?"

"At least, he wanted me to, and I've given my word conditionally."

Jack looked much interested, not at all offended.

"By Jove!" he said thoughtfully. "And what were the conditions?"

"Oh, oh, I can't tell you. It's too disgusting, too humiliating."

"Oh, well, you know what a common brute it is. And you needn't mind letting me know everything."

"I can't, Jack; I really can't. It would make you furious."

"It makes me furious to see the fellow, and to know what he has and what he misses having," said Jack fervently. "But don't let us talk about him.

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Tell me what's the matter? Why has my poor dear little Cis been crying her pretty blue eyes right into her sweet little head?"

He was caressing me as if I had been a child. I tried to laugh at his silly speech.

"Jack, don't be so absurd. I'm not a little mite of six now. Do be serious and treat me as the grown-up married woman I now am."

"By Jove, I hate to think of that, and I'd rather not remember it. I'd rather think you are still the sweet little round-eyed slip of a girl who used to run about Fouroaks in a holland pinafore, and steal into the kitchen garden to dig up potatoes when the gardeners weren't looking."

It nearly made me cry again to think of the old days those few words brought back to me.

"Look here, you must go."

With a great tug I got my hand away from him, and I put up my hands to my hair, which had fallen loose, and I tried to fasten it up into a coil again.

Jack seized my hands and pulled them down and my hair with them. I was rather shocked, even though it was nice to have him about me, affectionate, kind, merry, sympathetic, and de-

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lightful. But I knew I must be strict and hard and prim, and above all that I must send him away.

It would be simply too dreadful if Dawes were to tell Sir Lionel he had been here with me, and especially if she were to come in and find me with my hair down, and Jack laughing and pretending to help me put it up again!

He was delighted with the plight I was in, and he laughed immoderately at my efforts to get my hair straight and to frown him down at the same time.

"Oh, I'll go, I'll go. But I do want, first, to see what a woman really does to her hair when she is left to herself to put it up!"

"I shall ring for Dawes to do it," I said.

And I put out my hand to the little bell I keep on the table.

But he slapped his own hand down upon mine and laughed at me.

"You dare! You just dare!" said he.

"D-dare! What do you mean?" I stammered.

"Why, that I mean to have you all to myself for half an hour, to comfort you and to hear you tell me your troubles. And that I don't want Dawes or

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anybody else to come in till you've been able to tell me everything."

"How do you know you can trust Dawes not to tell Sir Lionel? She may be just a spy upon me, like that horrid Hanway."

"I don't think so. Ladies' maids are of two sorts: the sordid and the sentimental. The other beast was sordid; this one, if I mistake not, is sentimental." He bent forward to whisper in my ear, "She is sorry for you, and I've got round her."

I did not quite like this. And I remembered again the pledge I had given, or rather, was ready to give. For my terrible talk with Sir Lionel had ended without our exchanging the definite promises he had suggested.

"Well, anyhow, I'm not going to let you stay here, Jack. And I think you had no right to come. Maggie would think so too, I'm quite sure."

"Maggie! What has it got to do with her? As long as Sir Lionel will stand treat at the smart restaurants, and lend her money—and Meltham money—to play with at the tables, she won't want you to quarrel with him, of course."

"You ought not to say those things, and I know

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they're not true. But I'm not going to argue. I'm going to turn you out."

"No, you're not."

"Yes, I am. Jack, you'll be a dear, won't you, and go away when I ask you to?"

"Of course I will, if you give me a proper reason."

"Well, my promise to Sir Lionel."

He laughed.

"You don't call that a reason, do you?"

"Yes, of course I do. It's impossible to have a stronger one. I must keep my word. I've promised."

Jack looked at me. I wished he wouldn't. For the way in which his dear, handsome eyes met mine, so full of tenderness and kindness and fire, melted me up until I felt like wax, instead of the inflexible matron I meant to be.

"You said your promise was conditional. Conditional on what?"

I began to tremble all over. I could not begin again, and go over the whole of the terrible scene I had been through with Sir Lionel. However, with Jack I need not be so strictly on my guard. Surely I could trust him to understand without having it all uttered in cold, hard, shuddery words.

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"You won't ask me to tell you any more, will you?" I said coaxingly. "You'll be content to know that I want you to go, that it breaks my heart, but that I must have you go."

"Well, tell me the condition on which I am sent into exile. You can whisper it."

He bent his head, so that his ear was close to my lips, and he looked so handsome, with his beautiful, regular Eardington profile, that I felt as if I could have taken his head in my arms and kissed his forehead just where the little curly tendrils of hair will lie, in spite of all cutting and brushing in the world.

Instead of that I was very good.

"How tiresome you are," I said sharply. "Why can't you take it for granted that my reasons are good?"

"I never do that with a woman."

I was annoyed by these words.

"I don't like to be spoken of like that, as if I were just a woman and no more," I said. "I heard too much talk like that this afternoon."

My voice was quavering. Jack was sweet, remorseful, absurd directly.

"Did its nasty husband call it a woman then?" he cooed sweetly.

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"Oh, Jack, don't be silly! You must go."

"No. You needn't be afraid. You think Sir Lionel will come back and find me here. Well, I can answer for it that he won't."

He said this with a certain significance which made me curious.

"What do you mean?" I said.

Jack hesitated. Then he said:

"It's disgusting to have to tell you about such things, but if you must know, he was at the station when I came away from Monte Carlo, and he met a person there."

"What?"

Jack nodded.

"And he went away with her in a voiture."

It was as much as I could do to keep back the tears. So this was the end of our "stipulations"! It was true we had not definitely exchanged our promises, but it seemed to me absurd to think he was in earnest about giving up Mrs. Frewen, when he could meet her and go away with her within a few hours!

Jack put his hand on mine affectionately.

"There, don't think about it. It's nothing new, and so there is no need to worry yourself. But you

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can see that you have nothing to reproach yourself with in failing to keep promises made to a fellow like that."

I said nothing. Indeed, I felt this very strongly, but I did not want to have to admit it, and I was sorry that I had heard what Jack had to tell me. I saw in his eyes that he felt his own position to be strengthened, and I knew that it made it more difficult for me to be strict and prim and stern.

But he did not press his point at first; he just sat there, with his hand on my fingers, while I tried hard to keep them from twitching. He did not even look me in the face for some time, not until I took my hand quietly away. I was most anxious not to appear afraid of him, but it was because I began to feel fear very strongly.

It was evident he felt there was no need whatever to go away now that I knew all about Sir Lionel's meeting with Mrs. Frewen.

"I must do my hair," I said at last. And I tried to get up from the sofa. Jack tried to pull me down again. I stood for a moment with his hands round me, anxious not to let him see how frightened I was. And all the while I knew that I was even more afraid of myself than I was of him.

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"Sit down," said he peremptorily.

By the tone he was taking, I knew that I must show fight without delay.

"No, I'm not going to sit down again. I'm going to turn you out."

"You're not. I won't go."

"Nonsense. You must."

He jumped up and put his arm round me, while he took my chin in his hand and looked down into my eyes with that look which would have made me so passionately happy in the old days when I was free.

Now it made me shudder. And I struggled to get away, not looking at him.

"Let me go," I said hoarsely.

"No, no. I won't. I can't. Cis, you love me, don't you, don't you?"

I shook my head, fighting with him.

"No, no, no, I don't love you," I said. "I'm ashamed to find that you are not worthy of my love."

"Little Cis, don't say that. Do you think I would want you to fail in your duty, to break your vows? Do you think I would ask you to love me if happiness were possible for you in any other way?"

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"I know you have no right to speak to me like this; no right, no right," I said. "You must let me go. You make me hate you, hate you as much as I hate him."

"Cis, you don't mean it. You don't love him, and you love me. Where's the sense, child, of sending me away, of fighting with your own heart? If you were married to a man you could respect, even if you couldn't love him, it would be different. But you know as well as I do that he's an animal, a brute; that to talk of keeping your faith to him is an absurdity. Come, Cis, little Cis, don't you trust me? Don't you know that I can make you happy?"

"No, no, no; I won't hear; I won't listen."

"Yes, you will. Don't be frightened. Don't pretend to be cold. I know better. Cis, I love you, I love you. The sight of you makes me tremble like a leaf. I think of you all day long. I dream of you all night. Oh, Cis, don't send me away. You wouldn't make me unhappy, would you?"

With all the love and all the longing that was surging up in my heart, I felt that it was mean of him to play upon my feelings at such a time, when I was broken, heart-sore, feeling deserted and desolate. And yet I hadn't the heart or the strength to

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speaking harshly, firmly; to send him away with indignant looks and flashing eyes and the airs of a tragedy queen.

I could only try feebly to release myself, keeping my head turned away for fear he should force my lips to meet his and my eyes to look into his eyes.

"It isn't right, it isn't right—of you. Go away."

That was all I could say, and I said it in such a silly, hoarse whisper, that it was more like the snivelling complaint of a tired child than the outraged dignity of an offended married woman.

But I think perhaps it was the best way to meet him, because it made him ashamed to be struggling with such a feeble sort of a creature, and also it made him see that I meant what I said. If I had put on airs of haughty indignation he would have known that they were only put on, and he might perhaps have beaten them down and laughed me out of them, and—well, then, there is no knowing what might have happened, broken and wretched and deserted as I was.

As it was, he seemed disconcerted, and for a moment he relaxed his hold, and I ran to the door, just turning to whisper:

"Good-bye."

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Then I ran away to my own room, and threw myself upon the bed, crying and sobbing till I couldn't see.

I must say Dawes was very nice to me. I didn't scold her about letting Jack in; I hadn't the heart to scold anybody who was kind to me, and it was soothing to feel her hands about my head as she did my hair, and pretended, like a wise woman, not to see that I had been crying.

I suppose I ought to speak to her about Jack, and tell her I am very angry that she let him in. But somehow I can't be, so I have just said nothing about it.

My eyes were so sore with crying that I couldn't see to write, and I had to leave my diary for another day unwritten.

To-day I have had one great pleasure, a real pleasure without any admixture of pain, so I am feeling much better.

The day began pretty badly, however.

When I met him for *déjeuner*, Sir Lionel looked at me with the blackest scowl I have been honoured with from him yet. He flourished a letter which had come among his correspondence and said:

"Your people won't leave me alone; they have

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sent their lawyer after me again about those settlements."

I said, "Oh!" for I could think of nothing better to say. And he knew I didn't care a straw about the settlements, so it was of no use to pretend that the visit was my fault.

Indeed, the only thing I was thinking about was that I should be able to see Mr. Calstock again. It made my heart leap up, for after the dreadful scenes I have had, first with Sir Lionel and then with Jack, to know that I had a friend at hand who liked me in a nice way, without any horrible side to it all, made me feel much more at ease.

Sir Lionel flung himself into a chair at the table and scowled at me again.

"I don't mean to sign the documents," he said.

As he expected me to say something, I hunted for a reply, and suddenly remembered, what I had forgotten, that I had burnt the papers in Paris.

I reminded him of it.

"So they're done with?" I said wearily.

"Oh, no, they're not. At least they think they're not. Calstock will come provided with copies, and there will be another interview necessary to convince him that he is wasting his time."

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"Well," I said, "I suppose you will be able to persuade him of that to-day once for all."

He laughed and looked at me spitefully.

"I think so," he said, with a nod. "The fact is, I"—he laughed again, and looked at me with a fixed stare, watching how I took it—"I made a fresh will yesterday."

"Oh, yes," said I.

I was tired of the whole sordid business of wills and settlements, and money, money, money, and I hoped this would be the last I should hear of it all.

He laughed again.

"Yes," he said, "I know you don't care for money, while there are others who think something of it. Those others have more claim upon me than a wife who openly shows she doesn't like me. You will agree with that, I suppose?"

I saw that this was serious, and I thought a little before I answered him:

"I've always been accustomed to have money matters arranged for me, so that I really don't know much about them. But if you mean that you think it right that I should be exposed to want because we haven't got on together very well, I'm afraid I can't agree with you."

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He looked rather surprised. I had agreed to so much that he was not prepared to find I had spirit enough to disagree with anything.

For a moment his eyes fell and he looked a trifle disconcerted. Then he laughed again. His laugh is harsh and most unpleasant; there is always a mocking tone in it. Then he said:

"Oh, as to want, there's no question of that. I have left you"—again he looked at me spitefully—"three hundred a year. Enough, isn't it?"

I thought it was, and I said so, and he seemed disappointed.

"If you had been more companionable," he said sharply, "you would have had nearly half a million."

I said nothing, for if I had spoken I should have told him truly that I should be very sorry ever to have the responsibility of managing such a large amount. He frowned at me, and then said in an aggressive tone:

"The woman who understands me, who loves me for myself, will have the control of that sum."

I looked down. He did not understand what I felt, and he said, as if he felt elated at the thought:

"That is what a woman earns by being content to be—just a woman. Do you see?"

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I was disgusted with all this. He has a perfect right to do what he likes with his money, but he has no right to talk about these things to me. I looked up, with the blood rushing into my face.

"I don't want to see or hear any more about it," I said proudly. "What you do with your money is your own affair, and I suppose you do what seems to you the right thing with it. But I do think that it is not right of you continually to try to hurt and annoy me by telling me these things, and about other women. Do as you please; leave your money to whom you please; but keep it all to yourself. I don't want to hear any more about it."

"Oh, all right," he muttered. "I'm sure I have no wish to annoy you. But as your people are always worrying me about money, and I don't choose to discuss my affairs with them, I thought you had better know my plans, so that you can save me from further useless persecution."

I caught at the suggestion.

"Very well," I said. "I'll see Mr. Calstock myself——"

"There's no need for you to do that."

"I'd rather. I'll tell him plainly that you have told me what you have done, and about the will,

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that I'm perfectly satisfied, and that I beg him to tell Papa so, and to tell him also not to write and worry you about it again."

Sir Lionel sat back, frowning, and looking as if he wondered whether I meant what I said.

At last he said sulkily:

"If you see this lawyer fellow, he will set you on to complain of my provision for you, to say it's not enough."

"Oh, yes, I understand that. His point of view would be that of my people, wouldn't it? He would try to get all he could, for their sake and mine, wouldn't he?"

"I suppose so."

"Well, I'm prepared for that, and I can meet him and silence him. When once he knows what my own views are, he can pass them on to Papa and Mama. And when they see that I am contented, in the end they will have to be."

"Confound them, they won't be content. I know them."

"Well, I know them too. They will have to be quiet. You see they must be feeling rather ashamed of themselves for bringing me to this, and so they won't be able to tease me any more."

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I had broken down at last. That I should be insulted again by this man to whom I had been sold—for he had no right to force the knowledge upon me of what he was doing for this woman—was too much. I rose quickly from the table and walked towards the door. But he tumbled out of his chair, in the awkward sprawling way he has, and stopped me.

“If you had behaved yourself,” he growled, “you wouldn’t have had to complain that I had treated you meanly.”

“We won’t discuss it,” I said.

And I opened the door in spite of him, and wriggled out of the room.

I cried a little, not at what he had done, but at the brazen way in which he had boasted of it to me, and then I put all these horrid thoughts out of my mind, and remembered only that before the day was over I should see my dear Mr. Calstock again.

I watched from the window and saw him come, and then I sent Dawes to lie in wait for him, for I was afraid that Sir Lionel would send him away without seeing me if he could.

Then I looked out my prettiest morning gown to see him in, and chose the pale grey cashmere with

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the rose-coloured velvet underskirt and vest, and I was tucking a bunch of lilies of the valley into the front of it when Dawes opened the door and announced him.

I ran to meet him and seized his hand and shook it and smiled at him, so pleased to see him that at first I could scarcely speak.

He was looking just as grave and prim as ever, with his serious face and his sedate dark clothes, and his pince-nez, and he said, "How do you do, Lady Cecilia?" and shook hands with me in such a reserved manner that I almost felt foolish in having been so demonstrative.

"Aren't you glad to see me?" I asked, as he sat down, and I sat opposite to him and looked earnestly into his face.

It seemed as if the smile burst through his reserve in spite of himself, and then his eyes looked just as kind as ever, and that stern look on his face, which sometimes frightened me, had disappeared.

"Why, of course I am," he said. And then he grew grave again. "Though indeed I don't meet you in very pleasant circumstances."

"Oh, do you mean because you can't get Sir Lionel to sign those horrid settlements?" I said.

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"He ought to sign them. It's infamous that he should not. Indeed, I think that, by putting pressure on him, we may be able to force him to do the right thing," he said.

"Then I beg you won't do anything of the kind," I said quickly.

He looked at me as if I had been a baby.

"Very well," said he. "We will see to it. You needn't worry yourself about it in the least."

I laughed bitterly.

"Oh, Mr. Calstock," I said, "you need not be so careful and so nice with me. I'm not used to delicacy, I assure you. Sir Lionel told me bluntly this morning that he has left half a million to a woman—Mrs. Frewen, I suppose, and three hundred a year to me."

"Yes, I know. It's monstrous. But it shall be altered. We'll make him alter it," said Mr. Calstock indignantly.

"I beg you won't try. I'm quite satisfied, and to tell you the truth, I'm so miserable and so—so disgusted with the very name of the money I was sold for——"

"Hush, hush!"

"Oh, I can say what I think to you. I begin to

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think, Mr. Calstock, that you're the only person in the world to whom I can speak out. Well, I'm so shocked at the whole sordid business, that I would rather never hear anything more about it, and much, much rather not have any pressure put upon Sir Lionel."

"Surely you see that it's not right to behave as he is doing? You have committed no fault, and yet he declines to carry out his promises and to complete settlements which he agreed to as reasonable and fair."

"Never mind. Anything is better than driving him, pressing him. I won't have it done."

"But your father will insist, and rightly, upon this being done."

"He mustn't insist. I have been treated as a cipher long enough; I'm going to have my own way now. This matter of the settlements must be dropped. After all, I suppose Sir Lionel will live for a great many years: he isn't really old. I hope he will be convinced, long before the end of his life, that I'm not the greedy, selfish person he seems to think me; and if he isn't, why, I'd rather leave him to enjoy his own thoughts of me than have him forced to be fair against his will."

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"Well, we won't talk about it. I'm sorry that it should have been brought to your notice at all."

"No. We'll talk about something pleasanter. You can't think how delighted I was to hear that I should see you to-day."

"It's very kind of you to say so. And yet—I think I'm rather sorry to hear it."

He was not looking at me, but he just raised his head and gave me one look out of his strange eyes, that can be so hard, and then again so kind, and then he looked down again.

"Why are you sorry?" said I.

He frowned so much that I thought for a moment he was going to say something rather disparaging or unwelcome. But then he said in a measured tone:

"I think you could scarcely be so glad to see a dry lawyer if you were as happy as you deserve to be."

A sob came to my lips. I couldn't help it. Then I said:

"You are not a dry lawyer to me, Mr. Calstock. You are a most good and trusted friend. I always feel with you that you will tell me the best thing to do, and that, even if you didn't, I should know

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that I might speak out freely to you, that I had your sympathy and your good will."

He looked up at me quickly, and down again.

"That you have indeed," he said.

"I don't suppose you understand how badly I want a friend whom I can rely upon," I went on quickly. "People who ought to be my friends have not always proved worthy. But with you I *know* it's all right."

"I only wish there were more to be done to help you in your extremely trying position, Lady Cecilia."

His words were dry enough and his tone was measured, his very look was cautious, all the time. But I felt more and more that with him there was no need to be on my guard, that I could trust him completely.

"I hope you are not going away at once, that I shall see you again?" I asked anxiously.

"I shall be here for a few days on business, very unpleasant business, not connected with you at all."

"Oh, then I shall see you again?"

Something in my tone touched him, I think, for as he glanced at me again a look of pain passed over his face. Then he seemed to get angry.

"It's monstrous that you should have to speak

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like that to a comparative stranger," he said. "Are not your friends kind to you? You have some staying here, haven't you? The Melthams are your cousins. And Mr. Eardington?"

A shade crossed my face when he mentioned Jack, and I grew scarlet as it came into my mind that he might guess something of the relations between Jack and me.

"Yes, Jack Eardington and Lady Meltham are my cousins."

"You see them sometimes, don't you?"

I felt myself growing crimson, for now I was sure that he guessed something.

"Oh, yes, I see them nearly every day," I said nervously.

"They ought to be able to do something for you, or don't they dare?"

He lowered his voice a little, and I shook my head.

"She doesn't dare, and he"—in spite of myself I felt I was growing redder at each mention of Jack—"he couldn't do any good if he tried."

Then for the first time Mr. Calstock kept his eyes upon me. It was as if he read right into my heart, and I had to look away, feeling that he would

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learn too much if I were to look at him eye to eye.

But when he spoke it was to say:

"I hear you have made a great social success here, Lady Cecilia. Every one speaks about you in a very flattering fashion. Does that give you any pleasure?"

I laughed.

"Not the least," I said. "You remember what I looked like the first time you saw me, Mr. Calstock?"

"Indeed I do."

"Running wild, dressed anyhow, all by myself with my pets and my good people?"

"Yes, like a little wild rose."

The words slipped out of his determined mouth so unexpectedly, and they were so unlike the sort of things one was used to hearing him say, that he became quite pink when he had said them, and so, I think, did I.

"Well, that is what I like, to live at my ease, not to have to dress up, but to live quietly, with the feeling that everything and every one round me loves me. To hear them congratulate me upon having handsome dresses and splendid jewellery, and on

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living at expensive hotels, makes me laugh; it's so absurd, so different from what I like."

He nodded without speaking. But I could see his pity and his kindness in every line of his clever, dark face, and I liked him the more that he said so little, and that he tried to put what he did say into such carefully guarded words.

I drew my chair nearer to the table by which we were both sitting, and I leaned over it, looking earnestly at him.

"I want you to tell me what I must do if things grow quite too dreadful to be borne," I said in a whisper.

He looked startled.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I am afraid, considering what it has been like, that I must prepare for life becoming impossible. But I think it would be difficult for me to get away."

He looked at me earnestly.

"You won't listen to bad advisers, will you?" he said gently.

I felt that I was growing very red.

"I hope I shan't," I said. "But in any case I should like to have your advice first. How should

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I get away, to—to Papa, for instance, if I felt that I must go?"

"Without Sir Lionel's permission or knowledge, you mean?"

"Yes. He leaves me without money, except for a few pounds which I wheedled out of him to play with. I haven't much of that left, and he wanted that back. I think he likes to feel that I am quite dependent upon him."

"That you must not be. I will give you what money you want, and you can use it in case of emergencies."

He had taken out his pocket-book, and was counting out some English sovereigns.

"But I don't like to take it from you," I said. "I don't know how soon I may have to spend it, or how long it may be before I can pay you back again."

"Oh, I'll settle with Lord Rushbury."

I shook my head.

"Papa never has any ready money," I said.

Mr. Calstock smiled.

"Look here," he said, "can't you trust me, after all your fine professions, sufficiently to take the money and put it by, and not trouble your head about who gave it to you?"

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I looked him straight in the face. I don't think there is another man in the world I should feel like this with, but, as he said, I knew I could do this with him. I held out my hand.

"Yes, I can. Give it to me," I said.

He gave me twenty sovereigns, and I put them away, tying them up in my handkerchief and tucking them into the front of my dress. Then he rose. I sprang up, and all of a sudden my composure gave way.

"Must you go? Must you go? Let me know where you are staying. How long will you be here?" I panted out.

He looked at me with so much pity and grave kindness that he made me more sorry for myself than I had been before. I was ashamed, though, of having brought that look into his eyes when he had been so kind to me.

He told me the name of his hotel, and told me to write to him there if I thought he could help me in any way, for he should be there for some days. Then he bowed to me, and would have gone out, but I gave him my hand, which he took as if I had been a queen.

"You spoil me by your courtesy and consideration,

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Mr. Calstock," I said. "I am not used to being treated with any but sham politeness by anybody."

Again a look of pain crossed his face, but all he said was:

"I am sorry to hear it, Lady Cecilia."

"Your way of treating me heals many wounds," I said quickly.

Then I saw a vein swell up in his dark face, but it was with righteous and noble anger, and not with selfish passion, and he said quickly:

"Lady Cecilia, I had better not say any more. I am only here on Lord Rushbury's business, and I want to keep a strictly professional attitude. But if it is any comfort to you to know it, when I get back to my hotel I shall use—language which no lady could hear."

And without another word he disappeared quickly out of the room.

But oh, what a comfort it is to me to have him for a friend! Even if he can do nothing for me, I feel that it is good, among so many disappointments, to know that men are sometimes like him, honourable and unselfish and kind, without being too kind. It just saves me from thinking that the whole world is hideous and bad!

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I have been almost happy for the rest of the day, and Sir Lionel, I am sure, must have wondered at the change in me, without, I know, guessing the cause.

But the way he speaks of Mr. Calstock, who is so much better bred than he, as "that lawyer fellow" makes me hate him more than ever.

NICE, *April 15th.*

I HAVE been ill, and everything that has happened since that day seems to have passed in a dream. I have to look at my calendar to see where I am, and how long I have lived since then.

I find it was March the twenty-ninth.

On the morning of that day I little guessed what was to happen before it had ended.

I began it rather happily, with the feeling that I had a friend at hand to go to in case of need. I dare say it was this knowledge that made me look brighter than I had done for some time, so that when I met Sir Lionel, instead of being, as he expected, red-eyed and miserable, as I had been the day before, I was smiling and in good spirits.

He had been very disagreeable since the visit of Mr. Calstock, and always ready to gibe at my people, and to say things that rubbed me up the wrong way.

But I had got used to that, and not even his references to the will he had just made and the disap-

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pointment of greedy people drew any comment from me.

It was arranged that we should go to Mentone to lunch with some friends of Sir Lionel's, so we started soon after eleven. I was wearing a simple dress of embroidered white linen, with a big black hat, and Sir Lionel was angry with me because I would not put on something more elaborate. But it was too early to be dressed up, so I had to risk offending him. Indeed, I did not feel quite so submissive as I had done before. Now that he had, as it were, thrown me over and decided to go his own way without making any terms with me, I was not so much inclined to be submissive and humble.

However, before we got to Mentone, travelling in a big motor-car which Sir Lionel informed me he had just bought, he began to be less sulky, and soon quite complimentary again. And he stopped at a florist's, and brought me a great bunch of roses of all colours, which he insisted upon pinning into my dress.

When I objected that I had nothing to fasten them in with, he stopped at a jeweller's, and bought me a huge safety-pin with diamonds and a large emerald, and made me pin the flowers in with that.

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When we got to Mentone, we found his friends at an hotel, and they proved to be people of the same type as himself, and not very sympathetic to me. The husband was a middle-aged man, who might have been Sir Lionel's brother, and his wife was a rather overblown woman, much taller than himself, who had been very handsome, and who made up for increasing age by increasing juvenility of dress.

We lunched at a restaurant where there were a great many well-dressed people, and we met Maggie and her husband, and some friends of theirs.

Once more I had the wretched satisfaction of having a sort of little court round me, and, as before, as soon as Sir Lionel saw me admired by other people, his own admiration, such as it was, for me, seemed to return.

We had a long day, for we had to watch a tennis match, which I should have enjoyed if I had been with just one person whom I liked very much. There was a young German prince on the ground, who asked to be introduced to me, and this made Sir Lionel very pleased. When we got back to Nice he was again in one of those moods of his which I found the most difficult to bear, alternately paying me outrageous compliments and gibing at me for

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my coldness, and then again saying how proud he had felt of me that afternoon.

We had to dress quickly when we got back, to dine with some more people we knew at an hotel at Monte Carlo.

Sir Lionel asked me what I meant to wear, and insisted on having all my dresses spread out for him to choose one for me.

When I stood by him, uncomfortable and constrained, as Dawes carried them past one after another, Sir Lionel was very gracious and good-humoured, and kept appealing to me for my opinion of the dresses. I didn't care two straws which I wore, and I found it difficult to show the interest he expected in the matter.

At last he chose a black dress glittering all over with jet, and said I was to wear that and to have my pearls round my neck and emeralds in my hat and on my dress.

I can't bear emeralds, because they always seem to me to be too deep in colour, and to look common and hard. But I said nothing, of course, and I dressed in obedience to orders.

When I was dressed and had my cloak on I went into the sitting-room, where Sir Lionel was waiting

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for me, and he asked me to throw the cloak off and to let him see the effect of the jewels and of the dress.

He seemed to be very much pleased, and he hung about me and rearranged my jewels, and then he took up my cloak and wrapped me in it with as much care and tenderness as if he had been the most devoted of husbands. But he spoilt it all by saying:

"You will cut out every woman in the casino to-night, even the Paris beauties."

I did not want to cut anybody out, and I did not look pleased. So he began gibing again at my high-bred coldness, and we started on the usual uncomfortable terms.

But at the hotel where we were dining the German prince met us again, and showed so much anxiety to improve the acquaintance that Sir Lionel became proud of me again, and when we went to the casino afterwards with a party of half a dozen people he was again full of attentions for me.

At the casino almost the first person I saw was Mrs. Frewen, magnificently dressed, and wearing a splendid diamond necklace. She nodded to Sir Lionel, who pretended not to see her, and I saw the expression of her face change as he continued to talk

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to me, keeping close to my side with all the airs of a devoted husband.

I knew quite well that it only meant he was flattered at the attentions which had been paid me by other people during the day, and especially by the Prince. But I could see that Mrs. Frewen was fiercely jealous. And presently, while Sir Lionel was taking me through the rooms on his arm, showing me off, as I felt, to my disgust, and particularly showing off the pearls round my neck and the diamonds and emeralds on my dress, she came up to him, and putting herself deliberately in front of him, so that we both had to stop, she said:

"I want to speak to you, Lal."

He was annoyed, and he said quickly:

"Not now. Another time, another time."

But I slipped my hand out of his arm, and turning, joined the rest of the party we had come with, leaving him with her.

There was a sort of murmur of indignation at the way in which I was being treated, for every one knew Mrs. Frewen, and indeed she was so very conspicuous that evening, with her very yellow hair and pink face, and the splendid dress and blazing jewels she was wearing, that she was being watched

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as she walked about, and nothing she did could remain unnoticed.

To have this horrid scandal thrust upon my notice like this before everybody, to have this woman openly showing jealousy of me merely because my husband was showing me ordinary attention, was so horrible and so humiliating that I could have cried.

But I did not shed any tears. Jack, however, who was in the room, although he was not of our party, said afterwards that I was as white as a sheet when I rejoined my friends.

I was determined not to be subjected to another meeting of that sort, and after I had remained with these acquaintances for a short time I sent someone to find Maggie, who was in the rooms, and to ask her to come to me.

She and Jack came up together, and I told them that I was so tired after the long day I had had that I wanted to go back to Nice at once.

"I don't want to spoil Sir Lionel's evening," I said, "so don't tell him. But you, Jack, can let him know presently that I have gone home with Maggie."

Jack wanted to go with us, but I would not let

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him. Maggie, who had not seen the meeting with Mrs. Frewen, had heard something about it, and of course wanted to know more. But I would not tell her. I was afraid of breaking down again into silly crying. And where was the use? It was not new to be treated like that, only it seemed to me that the insulting behaviour of Sir Lionel's friends was growing more open.

Maggie was very indignant, and said that in the morning she and Hugh would come over to Nice and give Sir Lionel such a talking to as he had never had before.

I did not put much faith in the result of this, but I thanked her for her good intentions, and told her not to tell anybody about it, as I felt that, when things had gone so far, something would have to happen to put an end to the possibility of such an incident occurring again.

When we got to my hotel she wanted to stay with me, but I told her I was quite well, and would rather be left to myself. While we were coming in the train, indeed, I had been making up my mind to something. And when I thanked her for coming with me and bade her good-bye, I went straight to my writing-case and began a letter to Mr. Calstock.

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I had written about six lines, telling him of what had happened, when I felt my hand seized; and looking up, I saw that Jack was behind me. He took the pen out of my hand.

"Who are you writing to, my darling?" he said.

I could only stammer:

"Jack! You! You shouldn't have come!"

But he had his arms round me, and was looking at me with eyes full of passion.

"You were writing to me, weren't you?" he asked.

And as he spoke he took my right hand and held it to his lips.

I shook my head.

"No," I said, "I was not writing to you. Why have you come?"

"Surely you needn't ask. When that scoundrel insulted you like that to-night, I couldn't rest till I'd seen you to tell you what I felt. But you knew without my telling you, didn't you, Cis?"

I nodded.

"Yes, I suppose I took it for granted you would think what everybody else thinks."

"You can never expose yourself to such treatment again, Cis. You must come to an understanding with him."

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"Oh, understandings are of no use," I said.

I was speaking quite calmly, and I had taken my hand away from him with such unexpected firmness that Jack sat down on the floor at my feet in humble surprise.

"By Jove, how coolly you take it! I admire you, Cis, as I never did before."

"Well, what could I do? We didn't want a scene."

"Eberhard will be cut by every decent man on the Riviera after this. You will have to dissociate yourself from him altogether."

"I mean to."

I turned to my letter again, and taking up the pen which Jack had thrown down, tried to go on writing. Then I felt his arm round me once more.

"Cis, don't be so calm. It frightens one. You seem like a statue, not a woman. What are you thinking?"

"I'm thinking," I said, "that I can't go on with this life, and that I must break it up of my own accord."

"Bravo!"

"I'm going to run away."

He seemed rather taken aback.

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"I wouldn't do anything so irrevocable as that, Cis," he said gently, "without advice."

I turned to look him steadily in the face.

"Do you really think, after this, that I can go on as before, that I can risk more meetings of that sort, more insults, more humiliations?"

"No, no, of course not. But I should strongly advise you not to take any step without letting your relations see Eberhard and tell him the sensation his conduct has created, and——"

"Nonsense," I said sharply. "We have got beyond consultations and family picnics on my account now. It is not that I feel much more humiliated than I've done already, and I can see that what happened to-night was not his fault, but the woman's. But I do feel that at last it is of no use to go on. It has gone beyond insult to me: it has become insulting to all my family to be treated like this. That is how I feel it."

"By Jove, you're right!"

"So I'm going to make an end of it."

"How?"

I turned round in my chair, pushed him away from me, and looked him straight in the eyes.

"Jack," said I, "do you really love me?"

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"Cis, is it necessary to ask me that?"

"I mean, are you ready to give up something for me?"

"Now you know I would give up anything, everything. Unluckily, I've got nothing to give up."

"Well, nor have I. At least, what I give up is not worth keeping. So we're even to start with."

Jack looked puzzled.

"What do you mean? There is a world of difference between your position and mine to start with."

"Well, we won't argue that. What I'm going to give up isn't worth keeping. And you say you have nothing worth keeping either. And you say that you love me."

"Cis, you know I do."

"Very well. Then will you run away with me?"

He was taken aback. He had got upon his knees and put his arm round me again. He seemed to stiffen with it round me, and for a moment we said nothing.

Then he said softly:

"Cis, you don't mean it. You're too good a girl."

To his surprise I flung him suddenly away from

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me, and stood up, laughing so immoderately that I was scarcely able to stand.

"I'm too good, too good, oh, my God! After the night before last, and what you wanted of me, you find I am too good to be helped, to be saved from the life I'm leading."

I suppose I was hysterical, for I was laughing and crying both together, until the sobs that came to my lips seemed to be strangling me, and the very sounds I was uttering seemed to be so harsh, so discordant, that they froze my blood.

"I'm too good! He says I'm too good! Ah, Jack, I understand. You were ready enough to help me to deceive my husband, ready enough to come and tell me how great your love was. But when I ask you to prove it, to save me, to take me away from all this humiliation and misery, then you make excuses, you find difficulties. You—you are a coward, Jack!"

And as I spoke, I leaned down and hissed the last words at him. I was too much excited to keep still or to keep silent. And when I finished speaking I burst into fresh sobs, into more discordant, horrible laughter.

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Jack had risen to his feet. He was very white and much distressed, but he kept his head.

"Cis, I can't," he said hoarsely. "We should have nothing. How can you be willing to go away with me when you wouldn't even kiss me?"

I made a gesture of disgust, as if brushing him out of the way with his excuses, his caution.

"I see," I said; "you were willing that I should deceive my husband, but not willing to help me to be happy."

"Cis, one can't be happy without money."

"Money, money, money!" I almost shrieked. "It's always the same hideous cry. Money, money, money! I don't care for money. I don't want it. I want to be loved. I want to have someone to care for, to trust to, someone who will not wound me and bruise me at every turn. I thought you cared for me enough to be that, to love me like that, to wait till I could get free and then to marry me and make me happy. I am ready to give up all these horrible things they sold me for. I should have thought you might do the same. And to find that your love meant only that you were ready to dishonour me, and not to help me, to save me. Oh, it's disenchantment, it's—it's despair."

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I was so much excited that I frightened him, and he tried to soothe and calm me. He tried to assure me that it was because his love for me was so "strong, so noble," that he could not expose me to disgrace and poverty.

But I laughed at him, for I understood.

I saw through him, my old Jack, as I used to call him, whom I had trusted and believed in even when he wanted to make me do wrong.

I saw how selfish he was, and that it was not nobility, not devotion, that made him unwilling to take me away. It was the fear of poverty, the fear that we should be badly off, that made him hang back and refuse.

He tried hard to show me how unselfish his love was, but remembering the scene of two nights before, I could not believe him. I listened, sobbing quietly, while he urged me to let him and Hugh and Maggie call upon Sir Lionel, and talk to him, and insist upon my having a separate establishment and a handsome allowance, and upon being free to lead my own life in my own way.

But I was disgusted. Through it all I could hear the same old parrot-cry, "Money, money, money!" I was to have a "handsome allowance." Ah, there

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was the important point. I was to be free to spend my own money, in my own way, with my own friends.

Perhaps I was unjust, but it seemed to me that Jack was suggesting the plan which would suit him best. It seemed to me that it was for him and not for me that he was proposing a pleasant plan of settlement.

I did not say so, but I listened so stiffly, in such a rigid way, that he presently broke off, and said that I was foolish and unreasonable, and that it was impossible to do anything for me if I would not lend myself to any suggestion for my good.

When he swung away from me, saying that, I leaned back in my chair, and said quietly:

"Yes, I believe I am impossible, Jack. But I know you will forgive me. I've been put into an impossible position. Will you take a letter to the post for me?"

He turned slowly and sullenly.

"A letter! Who to?"

His tone was that of a jealous man.

"It's to my father's solicitor."

He looked rather startled.

"Are you going to law then? Not going to try

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an amicable settlement first? You would gain more by that."

I made a gesture of impatience.

"I don't want to gain more. Will you post it?"

"Oh, I suppose so."

I finished my note to Mr. Calstock very quickly, only telling him that I wanted him to come and see me as early as possible on the following morning. My hand was shaking so much that I could scarcely write legibly, but at last I managed to sign my name in a scrawly fashion, and fastening the envelope, I gave the letter to Jack, and held out my hand to him.

"Good night, and thank you, Jack," I said.

He gave me one look, imploring, anxious, perplexed. But I was tired out with emotion, and I looked, I dare say, as if I could feel nothing. So he took my hand, and pressed it hard in his, but did not dare to ask for so much as a kiss.

"Good night, my dear," he said. "God bless you."

And he went out.

I heard a motor-car drive up as he went down the corridor, but it did not occur to me to connect it with Sir Lionel.

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I fell, shaking and feeling faint, into a chair, and putting my hands up to my face, found that it was quite wet and cold.

I had had another disappointment, another blow. Jack had proved a broken reed. It made me shudder to think of the danger I had been in but a couple of evenings ago, from a man who cared so little for me after all.

But there was still Mr. Calstock. And I knew that I could trust him as I could myself.

But I felt shaken, bruised, after my interview with Jack, and when the door of the sitting-room opened, and Sir Lionel came in, I was so sick with the horror of all I had gone through that I felt I could bear no more, so I sprang up from my chair with a cry, and ran for the door as if I had seen a ghost.

I think when he first came in, though he had tried to put on a jaunty sort of air, Sir Lionel felt ashamed of himself and would have been ready to be humble. I hope so.

But when he heard me cry out, and saw me fly like that, he became suddenly fierce and angry and irritable and savage, and he sprang after me, and seized my long jetted net draperies, so that they came away in his hands.

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"D——n," he said.

But he still held fast to the trails of torn material, and I could not at once break away. He twisted them up in his hands till I was caught, and staring into my face, he said roughly :

"What are you running away for? You have got to stay and listen to me."

"No," I said. "Not to-night. I will hear you in the morning. But not now."

"You will hear me now," he said.

And he flung me into a chair so that I only just escaped falling to the floor.

"It was not my fault. You know what I mean. What took place this evening. I'm sorry, but it could not be helped. You will have to look over it."

I said nothing. I was determined not to have any further argument with him. There was nothing I could say that would have any effect except to irritate him, and I did not want to quarrel; I wanted to leave everything as it was until I had consulted Mr. Calstock.

As to overlooking what had happened, I knew that it was of no use. Since he had allowed it to become an open scandal, there was no hope that I

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could get any relief except by separation. But that would be better arranged by my friends than by me.

I felt much too helpless and weak against him to try to settle things by myself.

He came to me, and plunging his hands in his pockets, stood over me.

"Come now," he said, "it's the last time you shall have anything to complain of."

For a moment a horrid fear seized me by the throat. We were past the time when I could have made it up with him, and yet I feared that was what he was going to propose. I thought he was going to tell me that he had given the woman up since her insulting behaviour to me. In that case he would want me to be reconciled, entirely reconciled, and I felt that such a reconciliation was now impossible to me. I could not like him, believe in him, or trust in him.

"I complain of nothing," I said. "Don't ask me anything more to-night, please."

I got up from the chair, and went quickly towards the door. But he got there first, and he stood with his back to it, and he burst into loud laughter in my face as I reached him and staggered back a step.

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I stood paralysed, as he laughed on and then stopped suddenly.

"Drop that, please," he said with sudden savagery. "Drop that high and mighty tone with me. You can't keep it up, you know. You have no right. You are no better than I am, for all your high breeding and your airs of virtue. You have just said good night to your lover."

I was not even startled. I was past caring what he thought or what he knew.

"I have not," I said quietly. "I have no lover."

"That's a d——d lie," he said, stamping on the floor. "Do you suppose I have no eyes in my head? Look at the state of your hair. Look at your crushed flowers. Besides, I met the sweep outside the door, and I know, from his manner, that he had come from you, and that you——"

I put out my hand.

"Stop," I said. "Since you know that, you shall know all. It's true I've had my cousin here, and it's true he was ready to be my lover."

"Oh, you admit that, do you? You——"

I cut him short.

"Where is the harm of admitting that other men are like yourself, ready to bestow what they call

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love on any women except those they have sworn to take care of?"

He seemed taken aback by these words, and he stared at me, as if wondering what was coming next.

"Well," he said at last, "I want no sermons."

"I'm not going to preach."

"I should think not," he sneered. "After your behaviour!"

"You don't know anything about my behaviour yet," I said. "But I'm going to tell you all about it. Jack Eardington is not my lover, never has been, never will be. But I wanted him to be; I wanted him to be more than that."

Sir Lionel was taken by surprise, and I saw that all his professed doubts of me had been a sham. He had never for a moment thought me false to my wretched vows. Probably he despised me as incapable of feeling enough to be so, but anyhow that he had believed me steadfast I saw at once.

"What!" he stammered.

I went on, clasping my clammy hands and staring at him, breathing noisily.

"I wanted him to run away with me."

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I saw the glistening sweat on his forehead.

"You—you did, you!"

"Yes. If he had been willing to take me, I should have been out of the hotel by this time."

"I don't believe it. You are not such a fool."

"Oh, yes, I was a fool. It was he who was not a fool. He wouldn't take me. It is he you have to thank, not me, that you have not got a fresh scandal to meet."

"Well, it's lucky for you it went no further. For I should never have divorced you. I should have left you to bear the punishment of your own d——d folly."

It was my turn to laugh.

"Punishment!" I cried. "How could you punish me? When once I had got away! There's no punishment imaginable compared with what I've suffered with you!"

Sir Lionel went red with rage, and the great vein swelled up on his forehead.

I was too much excited to care what I said, and this new defiance, so unexpected in me, maddened him as if a tame rabbit had turned and bit him. He did not know what to do to express the fury which possessed him. I saw his lips curl away from

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his teeth and his hands clench, and when he spoke his voice was hoarse with rage.

"Y-y-you've suffered, have you? S-s-suffered with me? Then, d-d-d——n you, you shall suffer no longer. Out of the house, my lady; out of the house with you! Go after your precious lover, cousin, whatever he is; after him, after him. Tell him to take you with him and make you as happy as—as you deserve to be!"

I thought he would choke upon the last words. Then, seizing me by the arm, he flung open the door, and dragging me along the corridor and down the staircase, rushed across the hall with me, and taking me right out into the road, flung me from him and went back into the building.

I had been conscious of the figures of men and women about us as I was forced along—of remonstrant voices, of a hubbub and confusion.

And now, as he went back, I knew that he was met by shouting men, and that he was occupied in disputing with someone at the hotel door.

But I did not want to be taken back; I did not want to be seen even by helpers and sympathisers. I was filled with shame and misery, and I felt as if I were all one smarting wound.

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The night air chilled me and made me shiver; I was hatless, and the dress I wore was open in the neck and my shoes were thin slippers.

But I did not turn back. There was only one place to which I could go, only one friend who could help me. I knew where Mr. Calstock lived, and it was straight to his hotel that I ran.

Picking up the train of my dress, and disregarding the comments which were made upon my appearance by the few passers-by, I flew along like the wind, and reached Mr. Calstock's hotel, which was a quiet one, while the lights were still burning.

There was scarcely any one about, to my great relief, but I found an astonished waiter, and asked him to tell Mr. Calstock that a lady wanted to see him at once.

The man looked hard at me, but I suddenly thought of something to say:

"Mr. Calstock is my father's lawyer," I said.

Then he showed me into a long dining-room where all the lights were out except one lamp on a table and left me there.

To my great relief, in a few minutes Mr. Calstock himself came in, looking very grave indeed.

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"Lady Cecilia! I guessed it was you. What is this?"

I was not even wearing a hat, and my torn dress and loosened hair made me look a dreadful creature.

"Take me where we can talk," I said, noticing that there was a door ajar at the end of the room.

"Yes. I have a sitting-room. Come upstairs. Tell me first, in half a dozen words, the meaning of this."

"Sir Lionel turned me out of the hotel, with his own hands, just as I was, because I confessed I had asked my cousin Jack Eardington to run away with me."

Mr. Calstock frowned severely.

"Well, come upstairs," said he.

I followed him out, and saw that there was more than one curious face peeping at me from dark corners as I did so. We came to the sitting-room on the second floor, where the papers spread out on the table under a lamp showed that Mr. Calstock had been at work.

He gave me a chair, and I sat down and leaned upon the table.

"You are cold," said he.

I then noticed that I was shivering, but I had not

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known it before. He went to the sideboard and brought a bottle and glass to the table and poured out some wine.

"Drink it," he said quietly.

I shook my head.

"I don't want it, thank you."

"Drink it."

I obeyed without any more protests. They were of no use with him.

Then he sat down on the other side of the table, and we looked at each other by the light of the lamp.

"And now tell me how you came to make to Sir Lionel such a very unwise confession."

I told him everything, not keeping back the smallest thing, and not trying to lessen my own weakness.

"Of course," I said, when I had told him all, "you look upon me as a very wicked woman, to have asked a man to run away with me?"

Such a gentle look came into his eyes, that it was like a rush of warm, sweet air round me only to see it. But all he said was, in that dry tone of his:

"As a lawyer I have known worse."

"Mr. Calstock, I shouldn't have been wicked if I had been treated fairly. I suppose that is what

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criminals say; but I suppose that, even with them, it is true sometimes."

"At any rate, it is true you have not been treated fairly by anybody."

"You do think that?" said I.

"Certainly I do. There is only one thing to be thankful for, and that is that your cousin was too selfish to take you away with him."

"Too selfish! That is what you think? He says it is because he is too unselfish."

"Rubbish. He didn't mind what risks you ran by receiving him without your husband's knowledge. But for his making love to you no idea of such a thing as running away with him would have entered your head. He is a selfish young cub, and I shall give him a hint to-morrow to leave the Riviera."

"To-morrow! What does that matter now? We shall forget it. We shall be as we were before."

"Well, you don't want to see him again yet awhile. We have to patch up things between you and your husband."

"Oh, no, no."

"Yes, we must. That is the worst of such marriages as yours, that to break away makes matters worse. I have no doubt Sir Lionel told you the

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truth when he said he would not divorce you—if he could. Not, by the way, that he would have any chance of success if he were to try. Then think of the life that would be before you: you can't see it as I can, because you know so little of the world. But I can tell you that the life of a wife separated from such a man is one from which a woman like you would shrink. Somehow the taint of her husband's infidelities seems to reach her, no matter how carefully she may order her own life. And in the case of so beautiful a woman as you are it is almost impossible to think that you could stand alone and remain the pure, sweet woman you are. Therefore you had better let me try to effect a reconciliation of a sort."

"No, no, no. I'd rather anything than that. Mr. Calstock, you must be shocked if you like, but I hate him—I loathe him. To have him hate me is a thousand times better than—than—— Oh, it's shuddery!"

I covered my face with my hands, and he said nothing for a long time, though I heard him utter several impatient exclamations.

"Look here," he said at last; and looking up I saw his kind eyes looking earnestly across at me in

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the lamplight; "we must make one effort at patching up some sort of reconciliation. It's a bad business, but you may take my advice that it's the best thing to be done."

I moaned.

He went on just as if he were talking to a child.

"You have done me the honour to say you trust me, haven't you?"

"So I do, so I do, absolutely."

"Well, then, you must help me to make the best of a bad business, by doing exactly what I tell you. You have begun by being very frank, too frank with him. Now we must go on. He is sure to think you have come straight to me, and we shall admit that. Then he must understand that the matter is left in my hands."

"Yes, yes."

"Perhaps already he will be regretting his passion, and the disgraceful scandal he has started by turning you out of doors. He is used to having his own way in everything, but he is not a fool, and he will be realising by this time that he has done a most foolish thing, one likely to disgust everybody and to bring disgrace upon himself rather than upon you."

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"Yes, you are quite right."

"Then he will be in a chastened mood, and we shall be able, I think, to make our own terms for your going back."

"Going back! Oh, no!"

"Remember, you have left everything to me. I shall see that the terms we make are endurable to you. At least, not unendurable."

"Well, perhaps he won't have me back at any price," I suggested hopefully.

Even then he smiled at this outburst.

"In that case," he said, "I shall insist that your things, your personal belongings, be put into my care at once."

"Oh, he'll call me greedy again!"

"Well, he can tell *me* anything he likes. I'm not going to have all your things given to persons who have no right to them. The way Sir Lionel has been advertising his intrigue with this Mrs. Frewen is a scandal, and she's a clever adventuress who will certainly be shrewd enough to widen the breach, and to avail herself of any trifles in the way of jewellery or valuable personal property which Sir Lionel might have given you."

I shuddered impatiently.

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"Oh, I'd rather have nothing than quarrel over even my own things. As for the jewellery, I don't want it, I hate it," I said.

"Well, well, I should be sorry if you did look at the matter with my sordid eyes," laughed Mr. Calstock. "Now what can I do with you? I must take you to a couple of old ladies I know who have a little flat here, and ask them to put you up for the night."

"Strangers! Oh, dear!"

"Shall I take you over to your relations at Cannes, then?"

"Oh, yes."

But he frowned and shook his head.

"No, I can't do that," he said.

And I knew it was because of Jack, and I blushed. So he said kindly:

"We must be careful not to give Sir Lionel a handle against you."

Of course that was only common sense, and I assented. He had got up from his chair, and was wondering how he could get a covering for my head and shoulders, when a waiter came to say that Sir Lionel Eberhard wished to see him.

"Tell him I will come down and see him at once," said Mr. Calstock.

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Then, when the waiter had gone, he turned to me with a smile.

"Cheer up," he said. "I'll see what I can do. It may end better and more quickly than you think."

So he went downstairs, and I remained waiting, my heart beating very fast, dreading that I should have to go back to the hotel with Sir Lionel, although I knew this would be, in Mr. Calstock's eyes, the most satisfactory ending.

It seemed ages before he came back. He was alone, and was looking very grave.

"It is worse than I thought, I am sorry to say," he said, when he had shut the door. "This woman's influence is strongly upon Sir Lionel, and he came, guessing you would have come to me, to say that he will never have you back under his roof, and that he will make you no allowance unless he is sued for it, in order that he may force you into court and get you to make admissions which will be humiliating for you."

But I was delighted to hear this. Anything was better than to have to go back to him.

"Well, I'm no worse off than I was before," I said jubilantly.

"Oh, yes, you are," said Mr. Calstock quickly.

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"He has really made a will leaving all his money—or practically all—to this Mrs. Frewen. He showed it to me himself, signed and witnessed in proper form, and all the satisfaction I had was in warning him that he had better look out for himself now he has done it."

But I was not at all cast down. For this news had been discounted for me by Sir Lionel himself.

"I don't care a bit——" I said.

But then suddenly something came into my mind which made me put my hands up to my face and say "Oh!" in alarm.

"What is it?"

"My diary—and my dressing-case, with all the little presents from Mama and Papa and from Miss Trood and Kelly! You can make him give up that, and without opening it and turning it out, can't you?" I begged.

"Yes," said he. "We'll have that at all events."

I rather thought from the way in which he said this that he meant to have something more, but I said nothing, and he explained.

"Sir Lionel told me he was going straight to Monte Carlo to see Mrs. Frewen again to-night," he said. "So we'll take the opportunity, you and I,

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of going back to your hotel and taking what belongs to you."

"Oh, I can't go back there, after that scene!"

"Come, you must trust me, you know. I've spoken to a chambermaid who is going to bring you a cloak and hat, and a veil, and we will slip in and out again without much trouble, I hope."

He had a voiture at the door, late as it was, and in a few minutes I was muffled up in clothes that did not belong to me and ready to start. We said scarcely a word as we went, and we arrived in a few minutes. All happened as Mr. Calstock had expected. There was hardly any one about, and I don't think I was recognised, and we went straight upstairs after having found out that Sir Lionel was away.

Sir Lionel's suite of rooms and mine were both on the first floor, and mine came first. We went into my sitting-room, where we found Dawes crying quietly. Mr. Calstock questioned her, and found that Sir Lionel had spoken insultingly of me to her, and had told her that I should never come back.

Then Mr. Calstock told her to bring all my personal property, my trunks and my dresses and jewellery, and that we would take them away. She was

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delighted, and she hurried away to pack them, when Mr. Calstock asked me what had become of my pearls. I told him that they had come off when Sir Lionel tore my dress that evening in the sitting-room.

"Go and find them," he said.

I objected, but he insisted that they were mine, and that I had better take them, and I went to the sitting-room of Sir Lionel's suite reluctantly enough.

But when I got into the room, where I found the furniture in the same disorder in which I had left it, I saw the door of the bedroom move, and guessed that someone was in there watching me. I got frightened, wondering whether it was Sir Lionel himself, and instead of looking about for the pearls which he had torn off my neck when he seized my dress, I got out of the room as quickly as I could, and as I reached the corridor I heard Sir Lionel's voice. He was coming up the staircase.

I ran to my own sitting-room, much alarmed, wondering what would happen when he found me and Mr. Calstock and Dawes engaged in packing up my things.

But as I passed the door of Sir Lionel's bedroom I saw that it was ajar, and waiting behind it was a

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woman, whom I recognised by the glimpse of her dress as Mrs. Frewen. Her hand was at her breast, and in her hand was something bright and shining.

I could see no more, for I ran faster when I saw who it was, and a moment later I was in my own sitting-room again, trembling and unable to speak.

Mr. Calstock and Dawes were at at table packing one of my trunks, and they did not at once look round. I waited a moment to recover myself, and was just going to cross the room to tell Mr. Calstock what I had seen, when—ping-ping—a sharp report came to our ears.

At once I knew what it was, and I screamed.

“What’s that?” said Mr. Calstock, as he ran out.

Dawes and I followed him.

Lying in the corridor, just outside his bedroom door, was Sir Lionel, with a revolver beside him.

“It’s nothing,” he said, gasping. “It’s—an accident.”

But I knew better.

I whispered in Mr. Calstock’s ear:

“It’s the woman. I saw her in his room as I passed, and there was something shining in her hand.”

Mr. Calstock dashed into the bedroom, but there was no one there. Jones had run up, and was kneel-

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ing beside his master. Dawes was calling out for help.

I stood still, unable to think. But all the time I knew, I guessed what it was that had happened.

Dawes took me back into my room before Sir Lionel even noticed that I was there, I think. He was telling them he was all right, and that he wanted a doctor at once. His voice seemed to grow fainter and fainter as they took me away.

It seemed that I sat in the sitting-room for hours and hours. Dawes waited upon me quietly, saying very little. I looked at the trunk which she and Mr. Calstock had been packing for me, and I wondered what was going to happen.

Presently Mr. Calstock came in again, and I sprang up and asked him to tell me everything.

"It is most unfortunate," said he. And I knew that everything had changed, for his voice and manner were quite different, and though he was still professionally grave, he did not seem to be so much distressed as he had been when he brought me back to the hotel. "Sir Lionel met a man who was going to blow his brains out with a revolver, after having lost all his money at the tables at Monte Carlo. Sir Lionel brought the revolver away for safety, and

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just as he was taking it out of his pocket on reaching his rooms here it went off and shot him."

I shook my head and was beginning to tell him again about the woman I had seen, when, by a peculiar look, he warned me to hold my tongue.

"Sir Lionel wants to see you, Lady Cecilia," he said.

"To see me!" I faltered, incredulous.

"Yes."

He offered me his arm, and I took it, trembling very much. I heard Dawes sob behind me as I went out of the room. In the corridor he paused a moment, and said:

"You will be forgiving, I know."

I burst into tears, for I knew then that a crisis was coming.

"Dry your eyes," he said.

I obeyed him like a child, and he led me into the room, where Sir Lionel, partly undressed, was lying on the bed. He was looking so unlike himself that for a moment I stared at him, not recognising that it was he. But he tried to call me, and to smile, and then I went up to the side of the bed, and Mr. Calstock and the doctor who was there made me sit down.

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Sir Lionel turned his eyes towards me, and I understood that he wanted to be kind, and I put out my hand. He took it, but his touch was quite feeble and helpless, and it was I who held his hand, and not he who held mine. And, in spite of all I could do, I began to feel the tears raining down my face, for I knew that all was coming to an end, and I felt like a murderess.

And yet indeed I had never wished him any harm, only that we might be happy apart, since we could not be happy together.

But at the moment I felt exactly as if it had been all my fault, and as if the blame for his lying there like that was all mine.

I knew it was not really so, but I felt like that all the same.

"Don't cry, Cecilia," he said, in a whisper which I could scarcely hear. "I wanted to ask you to forgive me. I don't want you to stay here, but only to tell me you have forgiven everything, everything."

"I have, oh, I have indeed," I whispered back.

"Let me kiss your hand then, only that."

He seemed too weak even to raise my hand, but I clasped his fingers tightly in mine and bent down and kissed him on the forehead.

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It was white and clammy and cold, and it froze me to know how near the end must be.

"God bless you," he said. Then he turned his eyes towards the two gentlemen and tried to say, "Take her away."

And Mr. Calstock led me out of the room and back to my sitting-room, where I cried my heart out, and felt just as sorry, I am sure, as if I had loved him very much.

Again it seemed a long time, but it was not, before Mr. Calstock came in, and I stood up at once. But he shook his head.

"I don't want you," he said. And he turned to Dawes: "I want *you*. You don't mind, Lady Cecilia, if you are left alone for a few minutes?"

"Oh, no," said I; "but I wish I could be of some use."

"Thank you. Not just yet."

So he and Dawes went away, and the clock seemed to tick out hours instead of seconds till Dawes came back. She was crying, and she would not tell me why they had wanted her. And again I had to sit and cry for what seemed a long time.

When I heard Mr. Calstock's footsteps again I ran out into the corridor to meet him.

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"Do you want me now?" I said. "Is he calling for me?"

He shook his head.

"He is past calling for you now," he said. "It's all over."

That is the last I remember till I found myself in bed, with Dawes on one side of me and the doctor on the other.

I lay ill for several days, until after the funeral was over. Indeed, I had caught a chill, and I had a little fever, and the doctor was afraid of pneumonia.

Dawes nursed me devotedly, and Maggie, who came over to stay near me, was very kind, much kinder than she had ever been before.

She told me that Jack was inconsolable about my illness, which he imagined to be worse than it was. And I found out from this that Mr. Calstock had not carried out his threat to send him away.

The doctor would not allow Maggie to see me very often, as he said she talked too much, and I was glad of that, because of all things I wanted to avoid talking until after I had had a conversation with my dear Mr. Calstock.

I asked after him, and heard that he was still at

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Nice, and then I learnt that Papa and Mama had both been sent for. I was not so glad as I ought to have been. After all, none of this would have happened if only they had not been so ready to take for granted that a rich man could do no wrong, and that a man whose manners are good enough for society must be a husband suitable to a fastidious young girl.

I was longing to see Mr. Calstock, and to find out how they had managed to hush everything up, so that the story about the accidental discharge of the revolver was the one that got into the papers.

What had become of the woman? It would be dreadful if it should come out that it was, as I suspected, she who shot him, and if I should have to come forward and give evidence that I saw her at the bedroom door.

Yet that I did see her I was sure, and I was now just as certain that the shining thing I had seen in her hand was a revolver.

What did she do it for? Was she still jealous of me, even after the proofs of affection she had obtained from him? It seemed absurd to think so, but I had to bear my curiosity until the day came when I was allowed to go into my sitting-room for

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the first time, and then I sent at once for Mr. Calstock.

I thought he looked graver and more formal than ever, but I did not mind that in him now that I knew his goodness so well, and I held out my hand just as lovingly as I felt.

"Well, Mr. Calstock, come and tell me all. I have been half mad with anxiety to hear everything, lying like that, without being able to ask a question."

I made him sit close beside me, and then I whispered:

"Tell me, did you see the woman that night? How did she get away?"

"She hid in the sitting-room till everybody had cleared off, and Sir Lionel was carried into his bedroom, and then she got away."

"Wasn't she seen by anybody?"

"Must have been. But nothing has been said aloud, at any rate."

"Mr. Calstock," I said solemnly, "I am as sure as ever that it was not an accident, but that it was she who shot him."

"Of course it was," he answered simply.

"How could she, when he did so much for her?"

"That was the mischief. He had made a will

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leaving the bulk of his money to her. That will was his death-warrant."

I could scarcely repress a scream.

"You mean—that she killed him, murdered him—to get the money?"

"That's it exactly."

I was aghast. After a little thought I said:

"Well, it will be nothing but a curse to her, it can be nothing else."

Mr. Calstock smiled, and said, in a rather constrained voice:

"Oh, I don't know about that."

"I'm sure of it. However wicked she may be she will suffer something, she must."

"In such a flagrant case, wouldn't you dispute the will?"

"Not for the world. If I did, I should have to tell what I saw, to rake up the scandal, to face the wretched creature in court."

"Well, but aren't you too squeamish?"

"I don't know. At any rate, I won't do it."

"Well, it won't be necessary, I think."

"Tell me one thing more. She won't be able to prevent my having my own things, those I was going to take away with me that night?"

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"Oh, dear, no."

"That's all right."

I lay back on my pillow and closed my eyes, feeling rather tired.

"Your cousin, Mr. Eardington, has called to know when he can see you, Lady Cecilia," he said after a pause, speaking rather formally.

I shook my head.

"I don't want to see him just yet," I said. "Mr. Calstock, you don't know how I feel about him. I may tell you everything, because you are a sort of father confessor to me, aren't you?"

"Indeed, I should like to think so. It's what a good lawyer ought to be to his clients."

I made a little grimace.

"Oh, I don't think of you as a musty-fusty old lawyer, with me as a client," I said, smiling. "I like to think of you as I have found you, as a dear, good, trusted friend."

"Thank you."

"Only I wish you wouldn't be always *quite* so dry."

He laughed, but still in the same reserved fashion.

"Are you married, Mr. Calstock?"

I had succeeded in surprising him.

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"No, Lady Cecilia, I have not that—pleasure."

"I wonder how you would make love?" I said.

And then he grew very red, and so did I, and I think we both felt—at least I know I did—that for a widow of only a few days I was showing more levity than was right.

But he answered my question.

"I suppose, when the time came, I should do it—much as other men do," he said quietly.

"Well, I should like to be there to see," I said.

And I looked at him and saw on his face a look which showed me he was not so dry as his manner had to be. So I changed the subject rather quickly.

"I was going to tell you," I said, "how I feel about my cousin Jack."

I thought Mr. Calstock looked rather more severe than usual, but he said nothing, and I went on:

"All this that I've been through has changed me so much that I seem to have left behind me half the old feelings. And one of those that are gone for ever is—the feeling I had for him."

"I'm sincerely glad to hear it," said Mr. Calstock quickly. "For of all the——"

He stopped short, and I did not ask him to finish.

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For indeed I felt very sore about my cousin. However strong his feelings might be, they were not those I had thought he held for me; his affection was not of the best sort, the sort that would have suffered for me and have saved me.

So we were silent for a little while, and then I said:

"Why are Papa and Mama coming out to me? It would have been less expensive for me to go straight home to them. And you would have seen me safe back in England, wouldn't you?"

"There will be quite a rush for that honour," he said evasively, "I assure you."

"Will there?" I said. "Why?"

"You don't understand your own position yet, Lady Cecilia."

"What have I to learn?" I asked, after a little pause, rather frightened by his solemnity.

"Sir Lionel, however he may have lived, died like a man, and did the right thing—in all respects. He showed no wish for revenge upon one person who was ungrateful, and he did his best to atone to the one who—was not ungrateful."

I felt quite cold with a sense of impending shock.

"Go on," I said at last.

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"So he gave out that his wound was the result of his own accidental act, as you know."

"Yes."

"That exonerated—someone."

"Yes."

"And he destroyed his will, by which that person profited, and made one—which was the best he could do to atone to—you."

I was silent. After a long time, I said:

"Then I can help—poor Papa—and Mama."

"Yes. But I beg you to remember that your help must be judicious. I wish you had a sound adviser."

"So I have."

And I put my hand into his.

"I will not give one penny away except under your advice, Mr. Calstock. I know I can trust you."

"Well, so you can. But I shall have to swim in a good deal of hot water on your account, I fear."

I laughed.

"I expect you will. The knowledge that you have been a good friend to a most desolate woman must be your reward," I said gently.

"Shall I be very rich?" I asked nervously, after a little silence.

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"You will have sixteen or seventeen thousand a year, I think."

"Oh, that is very rich! I wish it were not so much!" I said.

"It is the sort of trouble that people soon become accustomed to," he said in his old dry tones.

"Well, I thank God for sending me a friend who will help me to do all the good I can with it," I said.

This happened only yesterday, and I expect Papa and Mama to-morrow. I have given Jack his dismissal. It sounds harsh to say that, and of course I did not put it like that. But the poor fellow knew what I meant. I was too angry with him for his overflowing civility to me, as a rich widow, to be quite kind, or even quite fair.

I have learnt so many lessons lately, all since I began this strange and terrible year. And this is the last entry I shall make in my diary. It is associated in my mind with too much that was painful for me to go on with it now that the strain is over for ever.

* * * * *

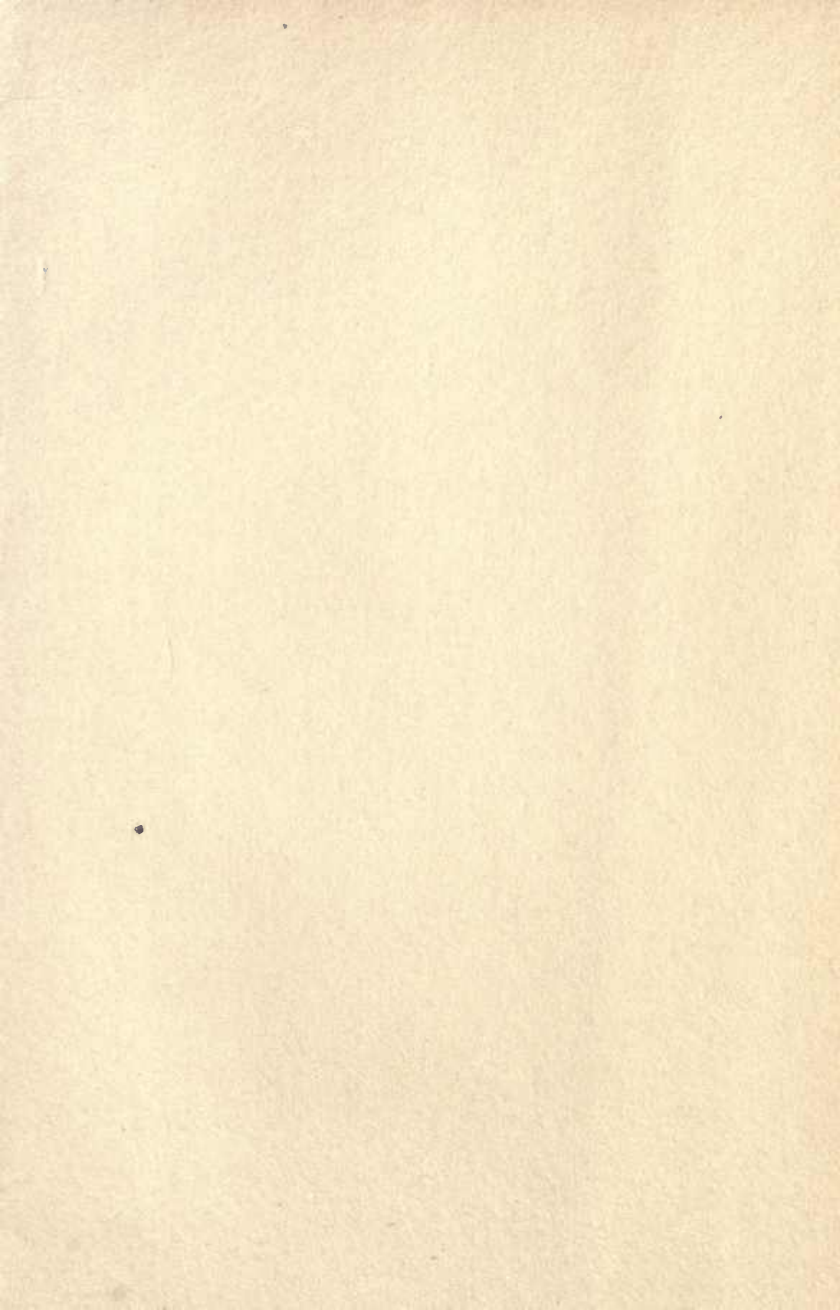
In April of the year following that during which the above diary was written, the following adver-

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tisement appeared in the first column of the *Times* and the *Morning Post*:

“On the 20th instant, at St. ———, ———
———, W., Gerald Ernest Calstock to Lady Cecilia
Stephana Anne, daughter of the Earl of Rushbury
and widow of Sir Lionel Eberhard.”

THE END



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